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OUR RECORDS OF THE NATIVITY

AND

MODERN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

A REPLY TO PROFESSOR RAMSAY'S THESIS

BY

JAMES THOMAS

“Testimonia non numeranda sed ponderanda sunt”

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PREFACE.

EGYPT, possessing a marvellous climate which enables it to hold undecayed in its soil and sands works of art buried for vast ages, has, it is well known, supplied in modern times an unceasing series of archaeological discoveries of the highest interest and value.

Even the literary productions of ancient days inscribed on the perishable film of the papyrus are being constantly brought to the surface in a state of preservation that renders it a comparatively easy task to decipher them ; and owing to the subjection that the country has undergone in turn to Greek, to Roman, to Byzantine, and Arab masters, a large proportion of papers relating to those alien but dominant races may be found side by side with documents of purely Egyptian character.

The search for such buried writings was for long confined to indiscriminate and wasteful gleaning by unintelligent native diggers and dealers, the *provenance* of documents exhumed being for the most part unknown owing to the natural reluctance of the finders to disclose the localities from which they had extracted their treasure-trove, and many of the papers themselves, acquired by casual collectors of curiosities, were widely dispersed and lost sight of.

But this hap-hazard reliance on the destructive grubbing of the fellah has recently given place to systematic exploration on the sites of ancient Egyptian and Græco-Roman towns and their rubbish-heaps, by scientific organisations, a method which has resulted in bringing to light a vast mass of fragmentary manuscript matter of all descriptions in various degrees of completeness and preservation, which is at present undergoing the lengthy processes of detachment leaf by leaf, selection, transcription, translation, and annotation by skilled specialists, notably in Berlin and London, some of the results of their labours having been already given to the world.

Most people are aware that for many years there has been controversy as to the possibility of reconciling with historic fact that definite reference to a Roman census demanding the attendance of Joseph and Mary at Bethlehem which is found at the commencement of the second chapter of the third Gospel; and as a work by Professor Ramsay, of Aberdeen, quite recently published, has offered an elaborate explanation of Luke's passage, based upon particulars afforded by some of these papyri as to Roman procedure in the matter of registration for taxation purposes in Egypt itself, thus bringing Egyptology to bear upon the vexed question, it is permissible to inquire how far this novel defence of the Evangelist's historical accuracy will bear the strain of examination and criticism.

On setting out on this inquiry it soon became manifest to the present writer that to isolate Luke's statements from the parallel account of the nativity given by Matthew, which equally claims absolute authority, would be quite incompatible with the satis-

factory treatment of the subject, so that a review of both would be necessary; the result being the present volume.

As to the mode in which it is proposed to carry out this examination, a few words must be given; and considerable difference of opinion seeming to exist respecting the extent of criticism legitimately allowable of any portion of the existing Gospel text, this matter also must be briefly taken notice of.

On this latter point the writer just referred to, who will be frequently quoted in the following pages, while contending for the general credibility of Luke as to historical detail, remarks (page 8) :—

“ The whole spirit and tone of modern commentaries on Luke’s writings depend on the view which the commentators take on this question. In some cases the commentator holds that no historical statement made by Luke is to be believed unless it can be proved from authorities independent of him. The commentary on Luke then degenerates into a guerilla warfare against him; the march of the narrative is interrupted at every step by a series of attacks in detail.

“ Hardly an attempt is made to estimate as a whole, or to determine what is the most favourable interpretation that can be placed on any sentence in the work. There is a manifest predilection in favour of the interpretation which is discordant with external facts, or with other statements in Luke ”;

and it is added (page 9) :—

“ The world of scholarship has always recognised that the criticism which looks only for faults is useless, misleading, unprogressive, and that it defeats itself when it tries to cure an evil by a much greater evil. Scholarship and learning sacrifice their vitality and lose all that justifies their existence when they cease to be fair and condescend to a policy of ‘ malignity.’ ”

It may first be reasonably asked: Who is the commentator of any repute who holds that Luke must be disbelieved as to historical matters unless his words are backed by other authorities?

Dr. Ramsay's fortune has been to come across some strange antagonists, as will be seen later.

The language of the remainder of the passage can only be interpreted to mean that uncompromising criticism is disallowed, limitations being suggested though not defined; for it cannot possibly be that intemperate or unseemly treatment of the subject is what is protested against: the impropriety of that is evident, and no self-respecting man would use it.

If cavils, disingenuous or ridiculous, are met with, the outcome of a real "policy of malignity," they confute themselves, and there is no damage done, save to the reputation of the ignorant or unfair employer of them, such being generally answered by neglect in all sciences outside theology.

But it is far otherwise when the objection raised, however slight apparently, and perhaps coming under Dr. Ramsay's disparaging term "Mikrologie," may be a real one, and perchance the first step in a direction hitherto unexplored, leading to further discoveries.

Any one with scientific training will at once call to mind some of the innumerable instances in which observation of minutiae at first sight absolutely insignificant has brought about important results.

It is submitted that unflinching negative criticism must precede a reasonable and justifiable confidence in any article of faith the truth of which is not self-evident. No practical man would care to build upon a foundation till he has carefully in every part probed and tested its solidity, and if the superstructure is to be stable and permanent will afterwards reject all

doubtful materials in its erection ; nor is he to be condemned in that he has gone no further than to clear the ground, and has not aspired to build ; by his work he renders that easier for others.

The protest of Dr. Ramsay might be a just though a needless one, if it were true that objectors were accustomed to distort the simple phrases of the Evangelist to force them to conform to their views, as he implies ; but the very contrary is the case. It is the well-founded complaint of the independent inquirer that the plain natural sense of the words reveals the difficulties ; the interpretations put forth by orthodox expositors to render them less at variance with their context, the parallel narrative of Matthew, or the statements of exterior authorities being in many instances so far-fetched that it is incredible they could have been in the mind of the original author. Examples of these distortions of meaning will be found in the following pages—very many more could be added.

In fine, it is claimed that there is no middle course between the absolute exclusion of such works from investigation and their full subjection to it, the Roman Church quite recognising this fact, and that therefore the above alleged consensus of “the world of scholarship” in reprobation of unfettered freedom of inquiry may be disregarded by the searcher for truth.

It is true that self-imposed limitations may exist for certain schools of thought.

As Renan says :—

“There is one thing a theologian can never be. I mean a historian. History is essentially disinterested ; the theologian has an interest—his dogma. Minimise that dogma as much as you will it is still an insupportable burden.

The orthodox theologian may be compared to a caged bird whose every movement is restrained. The liberal theologian is a bird, some of the feathers of whose wings have been clipped ; he believes that he is master of himself until the moment when he seeks to take his flight.”

Respecting the mode in which it is proposed to treat the subject, the present work will be an appeal for independent judgment. As Herbert Spencer points out :—“In estimating the relative claims of Reason and Authority we have to bear in mind that the supremacy of Reason is exercised in the act of choosing the Authority”; and in accordance with the motto on the title-page, authorities will not be counted but weighed.

It has, however, been quite a general custom for the defenders of the verbal accuracy of the Gospel records to bring forward authorities ancient and modern as though the mere utterance of the names were an exorcism to expel doubt.

It must be admitted that in matters of artistic or literary estimation, the *opinion* of authority may have valid weight. If we were to read that a sculptor like Phidias highly valued a work in that art by a contemporary we might take it for granted that it was a masterpiece.

But where we do not need opinions but evidence and reasoning, the mere views of others, however eminent, are of little importance, for there is no infallibility in any human judgment.

Moreover, with regard to scholarship or scientific and technical knowledge, a man may be distinguished or even supreme in one field of study, but a very inefficient guide in others.

We do not go to an architect, however celebrated, for advice upon a mining subject, nor is a skilled

Chemist necessarily competent to give a sound opinion as to the merits of a new link-motion for a locomotive.

Yet in spite of this obvious truism, the very authoritative geological views of highly-reputed divines of a century ago based upon the Mosaical writings, which are now silently put aside in face of the evidence since amassed, in their day swayed the vast majority, and it was rendered socially perilous to contest them ; and so it has happened in many other branches of knowledge.

Even in their own domain, men of vast intellect and learning may make mistakes and draw false inferences which, owing to the lack of the spirit of *original* investigation among their disciples, may mislead the world for a long time, sometimes for generations, till one bolder than the rest puts to the test of actual experiment the hitherto undisputed *assertion* of the master.

The erroneous planetary system of Ptolemy, with the earth the central body, which, owing to his vast reputation and the later all-powerful support of the Church, peremptorily displaced the more correct surmise of Aristarchus of Samos, and others, was for fourteen hundred years accepted without question, till Copernicus, in spite of ecclesiastical censure, revived the older hypothesis, thus freeing astronomy from a fatal obstacle to its progress.

Again, the single hasty and unsound generalisation, based upon imperfect experiment, that all transparent bodies dispersed light proportionately to their mean refraction, which lurked among the marvellous reasonings in the "Optics" of Newton, and was not again tested, easy as was the process, but taken for granted owing to the authority of him who

had announced it, held back for two generations the invention of the achromatic telescope.

Therefore the *opinions* of distinguished divines or important men in science or literature, apart from any reasonings by which they have been supported, are not entitled to unlimited acceptance, and something more than a parade of their names is needful if assent to their conclusions is to follow.

But it is when we find *ancient* Church authorities appealed to that this prevalent habit of merely giving names without qualification is most misleading.

Among the professed evidential proofs brought in to support, directly or indirectly, the Gospel narratives may be found the vague and sometimes mutually inconsistent statements of men living long after the date and in a rapidly declining civilisation—inaccurate like Justin, dull of intellect like Papias, credulous like Irenæus, or deeply prejudiced like Tertullian ; all of them swayed by the tendency which Dr. Newman recognises as common to those influenced by religious zeal, “to unintentionally misstate, exaggerate, and embellish when they set themselves to relate what they have witnessed or have heard”—in other words, strongly emotional, a frame of mind which does not make for accuracy.

That unconscious bias, more or less strong according to temperament, which exists in each individual, and under the name of “personal equation” is always taken account of in science when estimating the exact value of what he records and the probable direction of error, should not be overlooked when we call up any authority as a witness.

Yet the statements, or even the names, of these and like writers are again and again put forward without a single word of warning that they are other

than affidavits by authorities of a high order of credibility, most intelligent, accurate, and scrupulous, besides having been in a position to judge definitely of the things they assert.

As by a convenient legal fiction every Englishman is presumed to know the law, in this matter each reader is commonly treated as intimately acquainted with the absolute and relative value of the productions of these writers, on the truth of whose record such stress is laid and so much depends.

For these reasons, though arguments from any source are respectfully considered in the following pages, unsupported assertions, from whatever authority they come, are not accepted as demonstrations.

The aim of the present writer has been to make the book reliable; to prove rather than to persuade or convert; to this end he has been careful as to his facts and references. He has endeavoured to write clearly and simply, shunning undemonstrated assertion or the shelter of ambiguous phrases.

It may be thought that *minutiæ* have been sometimes needlessly gone into, as the words of the texts relating to the historical incidents of the nativity are taken every one without exception; yet the simplest unsupported assertion often calls for elaborate and tedious disproof if the author does not wish to lie open to the charge of evading any point of difficulty.

It is evident that this laboured process of confutation often repeated is fatal to the readability of a book, and that far more may be made in a literary sense by fastening on the most conspicuous anomalies and apparent contradictions in the work reviewed; still it would not be an honest proceeding so to

present the case, for, torn from their context, selected passages may be most unfairly manipulated.

Thus, though an inquiry like the present, analysing the entire text, might be impeached by some of like mind with Professor Ramsay as the carrying out of a “policy of malignity,” this would be an unjust accusation.

No honourable man puts pen to paper on such a subject without having investigated to the utmost of his power, and gained a strong conviction of the truth of what he writes. If the conclusions he draws are unfavourable to the accuracy of the narrative he has examined, it is that the inquiry which has led to them has, to his view, rendered those deductions inevitable ; if the reasonings he has employed are fallacious they can be confuted.

As the writer does not record the progress of change from confidence to doubt, and thence to incredulity, as to certain supposed historical incidents which he has accepted for years without question, and only presents results and discloses the process by which he has arrived at them, this treatment of the subject necessarily at first sight gives an air of abruptness and partisanship to views which have been actually the outcome of a very gradual evolution.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

PLAN OF THE WORK—JOSEPHUS AS A WITNESS.

THE opening chapters of two of our canonical Gospels, those of Matthew and Luke, are devoted to narratives of the birth and infancy of Jesus; the story in each case being entirely isolated from the body of the work, which starts abruptly thirty years later, as do the other two Gospels, with the baptism by John and the outset of the ministry.

It will be agreed that the incidents claimed as belonging to exterior history that happen to be involved in these narratives of the nativity cannot be satisfactorily treated as absolutely detached from the ordinary secular records of the country and period in which they took place, though they have been too often dealt with in that manner, but, on the contrary, if we are to form a sound judgment respecting them, they must be studied in intimate conjunction with authentic history.

For instance, we can only hope to obtain a correct view of such historical occurrences as the *Noyades*

of Nantes, or the introduction of the departmental divisions into France (which are somewhat analogous to the two main external incidents in the Gospel narratives) by treating either subject in connection with the great revolution in that country, which alone brought it about; it being only with tales acknowledged as mythical or legendary that a consistent agreement with the annals of a real epoch is of little moment.

It is proposed in the present work, not only to take note of what has been already pertinently advanced on the subject of the consistency with history of the incidents recorded in this part of the Gospel narratives, but to introduce further considerations called for by recent developments of the argument and rendered possible by the increasing precision of our knowledge of detail bearing on Egyptian and Roman contemporary history.

In carrying out this plan the actual story of the birth and parentage of Jesus in either Gospel will not be intruded on. This is in its simplest form but an episode of family life, separable from any outside national or political occurrences, and owing to the supernatural wonders that attended it, incapable either of proof by the demonstration that the reporters of it are found to have correctly represented historical events which they link with it, or of disproof in that they may have made statements which are not easily to be reconciled with what we know of the historic personages involved in the story.

It is thus a perfectly detachable question how far the writers of these two accounts are correct in the historical incidents which they relate after the lapse of years, and whether, though in every other case a layer of legend has encrusted round a notable event, in these two instances no doubtful or erroneous statement has found its way into the story.

A recent church writer, after pointing out the fact—which cannot be gainsaid—that the marvels of the nativity can never be demonstrated, “a large step having to be taken by faith,” adds, “but it is highly important to show that the circumstances with which Luke connects this marvellous event are true, and that in things which can be tested he does not fall below the standard of accuracy demanded from the ordinary historian.”

In merely extending this principle to Matthew, the historic part of whose story is equally involved, and with the alteration in the passage of “that” into “whether,” which better expresses an intention to judge solely on the evidence and the balance of probability, the aim of the present work is correctly outlined.

In Matthew* the connection with external history begins with the visit of the Magi to Jerusalem, which moves Herod to command the massacre of the Beth-

* The names Matthew and Luke will be used throughout instead of any more cumbrous definition of the authors of these portions of the Gospels, though it is not conceded that we have any warrant in ancient times for those titles. Also to avoid the repeated use of a lengthy periphrasis the term “prologue” will be generally employed in referring to these narratives of the nativity.

lehem infants, this again rendering necessary the flight to Egypt. Before proceeding to the examination of these incidents, so as to test their possibility or probability, it is imperative to have clearly before us the life and character of the Jewish King, with the state of his kingdom and its people at that date, for in the absence of such particulars it is impossible to form a valid opinion whether the conduct attributed to Herod himself, the Sanhedrim, and the populace by the annalist is compatible with their material interests and prejudices, and also with what can be learned of their behaviour in other matters.

In Luke, again, we should know something of the character and policy of Augustus, who, we are told, decrees a census throughout the whole of his dominions, and also of the system pursued by the senate and himself in the government of the provinces, along with the political position of Palestine, with regard to imperial Rome; the incidence of a census enrolment on that vassal state being in the third Gospel the compelling cause of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem instead of at Nazareth, the dwelling-place of the family.

We may here assume that the details of the history of the Augustan period in Rome, the provinces, and Palestine—all involved in these references—are by no means so certainly present in the mind of the average reader that anything beyond a bald indication of authorities is unnecessary; and even in the contrary case it is always quite possible that

perfectly legitimate deductions therefrom may have escaped his attention.

Only when this preliminary labour has been carried through, and we have a definite view of the historic background to the scene in which these incidents are enacted, can we proceed with confidence to review them in detail, testing their degree of harmony with undoubted history, and affix a just value to the arguments as to their fidelity to truth, based either on internal or external evidence that have at various times been brought forward.

It is unfortunately the fact that, owing to causes that will be later alluded to, the original written authorities on which we depend for our knowledge of the Augustan period are extremely few in number, and in many cases in their present state fragmentary ; the story of the time having to be caked out by chance hints from inscriptions, papyri, &c.

However, in like manner as we are enabled by holding the leading thread of correlation to reconstruct with considerable accuracy the forms and characters of extinct organisms of which time has spared merely insignificant remains, so from the scanty scraps of historical record of the words and deeds of individuals in days long past, which once formed links in as complete a chain of causation as that which binds us to-day, we may often build up a fairly accurate appreciation of their sentiments and probable line of action in other matters, and may accept or reject statements made respecting them with some approach to certainty.

Any anecdote for instance that would display Cæsar as a poltroon or Socrates as a dullard would be scouted as fiction though direct disproof might be impossible, and although we have not generally to deal with improbabilities so immense, yet we may find the action or intention attributed, to be extremely unlike what we might expect from what we know of the actual deeds of the individual, and be even contrary to what we have good cause to believe would be the dominant interests of self.

The often quoted apophthegm of Butler “probability is the guide of life” will therefore be applied in the following investigation, in which the balance of probability or improbability is all-important; the test being whether the incidents represented as historic are, when carefully examined, such as we would credit in daily life and in secular matters with worldly interests involved.

Certain exterior documents are inserted as corroborative evidence in the works themselves. These are in the first place lists of Jesus's ancestors, of which each gospel has one, and secondly five short extracts from the Hebrew scriptures introduced by Matthew alone as foretelling certain incidents of the nativity and childhood; the pedigrees being used to demonstrate a descent from David, while one of the scripture quotations is brought in to prove that not only must the Jewish Messiah be of David's race but must be born in Bethlehem. These documents have therefore to be afterwards taken notice of.

Finally, the question whether these two accounts are authentic—written by the same hands as penned the records of the ministry and death—or, so to speak, were mere annexes, additions of a later period, nowhere bonded into the main fabric, and showing distinct traces of their later construction and the motive for it, will be examined at the close of the work.

In undertaking the present inquiry three writings have been specially selected as typical and able expositions of the various views of those who explain and defend the historical details given by the two Gospel writers as attending the birth of Jesus—the works so chosen being as follows:—

First. “Das Geburtsjahr Christi,” by A. W. Zumpt (Leipzig, 1869), a deeply learned and much quoted analysis of all historical details having any possible connection with Luke’s narrative of the nativity, reference to which will be frequently made in the following pages.

Second. The article “Jesus” in the “Encyclopædia Britannica” (ninth edition), stated to be by Archdeacon Farrar, which though, from its extensive range, embracing the whole life, incapable of bestowing much detail on the incidents attending the birth, is to be accepted as a succinct statement of the ordinary views of the orthodox church upon this portion of the Gospels. As, however, the article is designed for general information much impartiality is demanded, as also that no positively incorrect or misleading

assertion should find a place.* The paragraphs of this article which bear upon the subject to be discussed in the present work will be reviewed, as such authoritative writings materially influence or actually build up the opinions of the majority.

Third. The work recently published by Professor Ramsay, of Aberdeen, "Was Christ born at Bethlehem?" (Hodder & Stoughton, 1898), as it takes note of the latest developments of the views of critics at home and abroad respecting Luke's census as influenced by modern research, introducing also a new and ingenious theory respecting it, will have close attention.

It is impossible for any writer treating on this subject, in the desire to be original, to ignore the labours of David Strauss, for the same doubts and suspicions, the observation of the same apparent inaccuracies, will infallibly result from a careful and unbiassed study of these documents. But Strauss has by no means exhausted the subject, partly owing to the enormous range of his work, but especially because he takes little count of the incongruities presented by the recorded incidents in each when brought into contact with undoubted history.

Our principal, almost unique, informant of the events political and social of the period in Palestine, Roman notices being rare and fragmentary, is

* As for the aim of the "Enc. Brit.," we read in the prefatory notice, "It has to do with knowledge rather than opinion, and to deal with all subjects from a critical and historical, rather than a dogmatic point of view."

Josephus, the Jewish historian: it is, therefore, incumbent on us before quoting him, as it will be necessary continually to do, to look into the personal record of this most important witness if we are to affix a definite value to his evidence.

Born in A.D. 37 (three or four years after the crucifixion), of a high sacerdotal family, and connected through the mother with the blood royal of the Asmonæans, Josephus was educated for the priesthood, and he himself tells us was at the age of fourteen a prodigy of scriptural learning.

As a youth he joined one of the ascetic Essene communities, but probably found the restrictions and severities too great for endurance, as we next find him at about the age of twenty-six voyaging to Rome, where he obtained the protection of Poppæa, the mistress and later the wife of Nero, who was favourable to his nation, and procured for him the release of certain priestly prisoners.

This visit must have given the young diplomat a view of the might of the Roman Empire, though a few years later (A.D. 66) we find him appointed prefect of Galilee by the central national organisation at Jerusalem, which was scheming for independence.

At length, being accidentally blockaded in Jotopata, a Galilean town-fortress, he was forced to conduct the defence against Titus, the son of the general, Vespasian, whom Nero had appointed to suppress the uprising, and, if we may credit his own statement, prolonged it by skilful warlike expedients. When the town fell he became a prisoner, but soon

made himself useful and acceptable to Titus by his knowledge of national affairs and by the unblushing use of the ancient prophecies concerning future rulers of the world, who he demonstrated could be no others than Vespasian and his son.

His presence with the Roman forces preserved him from the dangers attending a participation in the prolonged party struggles at Jerusalem, which ended by the annihilation of the moderate section.

The siege and destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), which had been delayed for two years by the death of Nero and the momentary rise and fall of various imperial claimants prior to the elevation of Vespasian, ended the war, Josephus, in the train of the young conqueror, visiting Rome for the second time, and at a later date composing there under imperial patronage the voluminous works still extant.

These works comprise—first, a history of the “Wars of the Jews,” this being followed several years afterwards by a more ambitious compilation, the “Antiquities,” which, though for the greater portion of its earlier record but an adaptation of the Hebrew scriptures, is interesting from the variants which the dread of Gentile criticism had rendered advisable, and which our author is an adept in supplying. Both these works deal with the history of his country under Herod the Great, and give concerning that time an infinity of details of the greatest value, supplying besides copious material for fixing dates, which, wholly wanting in all the early Christian literature, have been often most satisfactorily supplied from his pages.

Besides a short autobiography, he also wrote a reply to a scurrilous attack by Apion on his people and religion; this contains excerpts from works now lost treating of the ancient history of Egypt, and is therefore, apart from its literary value, which is marred by his Semitic boastfulness, an important relic of antiquity.

Josephus has a thorough belief in his own dignity, not only as due to his priestly descent but also to his position as a prophet and his power to interpret visions. That he was highly credulous will not be doubted by any one who has read him.*

Towards the compilation of Herod's life Josephus had, as far as we know, principally to depend upon the historical work of the King's confidant and adviser, Nicolaus of Damascus, a man of international reputation, who wrote also of philosophy and geography.

This history, now lost, had an immense range, and was brought down to the time of Augustus, to whom the author was well known and with whom he even corresponded. It must have been very voluminous, for Josephus (Ant. xii., 3—2) in referring the reader to it, adds "Let him read the 123rd and 124th books of this history."

* For instance—"I have seen a man of my own country whose name was Eleazar releasing people who were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian and his sons and the whole multitude of his soldiers."—"The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring that had a root of one of the plants mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through them," &c., &c. (Ant., viii., 2—5.)

While his brother Ptolemœus, equally talented, managed Herod's financial and business matters, Nicolaus acted not only as legal adviser but at need as ambassador; he defended the cause of the Jews of Asia before Marcus Agrippa, and when the succession was in abeyance after the King's death, successfully pleaded the cause of Archelaus before Augustus.

As a personal friend as well as Minister of Herod, Nicolaus knew most of the court secrets, and from this source no doubt Josephus obtained the minute details of intrigues and plots that are found in his history, it being most probably available for all occurrences up to the death of Herod and the settlement of the succession; at all events, Josephus's story from that time for the annals of several years becomes conspicuously bald and fragmentary.

But it is unquestionable that he never could have obtained from Nicolaus some of his most remarkable—nay extravagant—tales (to be later dealt with), such as of the murder of the boy Aristobulus, of the desecration of David's tomb, or of the extraordinary gathering planned by him of the whole of the Jewish notables that he might destroy them at one blow. For these, it will be seen, he must have been indebted to the malignant ingenuity of the Jerusalem party.

The influence of each of these utterly opposing representations of Herod's character is apparent to the careful reader throughout Josephus's history, but the two strata or *laminæ* are seldom blended, being

deposited in his pages with a naïve impartiality, though when he attempts to combine them, as in the tale of the desecration of David's tomb, the result is singular.

The lengthy and diffuse histories of Josephus would be little read and less valued at Rome towards the close of the first century, owing to the intense aversion and contempt felt there towards the Jewish people, though installed in the Flavian and other libraries, thanks to Imperial patronage ; but later they would be sure to be largely circulated among the Christians, who obtained from them nearly all they knew of the chosen people, whose prophets, they claimed, had foretold their Master.*

Though Josephus tells (Ant. xx. 9—1) of the murder of “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James,” and who at the time (A.D. 63) was at the head of the Jerusalem Christians, it is somewhat remarkable that Jesus is nowhere mentioned in a direct manner.

This omission was supplied between the days of Origen and those of Eusebius by a paragraph in which Jesus's death is recorded and his divinity almost recognised by this Jew of the Jews. However, the insertion is so artless and maladroit that, as Renan says of another of these clumsy interpolations, “the edges of the wound are still raw.”

* This ignorance did not so much exist in the first century, when a large proportion of converts would be Jews, but rapidly developed when, with the vast influx of Gentile proselytes, church and synagogue drifted further apart.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORICAL SURROUNDINGS OF THE NATIVITY.

PALESTINE, ITS GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS AND PEOPLE—THE
JEWISH SECTS.

THOUGH the dominions of Herod at the time of the nativity had, thanks to accretions of territory due to the favour of Augustus, spread in several directions much beyond the recognised domain of the Jewish race, that region was looked upon as the nucleus of the kingdom.

This more exclusively Hebrew territory, vaguely bounded towards the south by the steppes of Idumea, the eastern limit being clearly defined by the Dead Sea and further north by the geologically remarkable depression in which flows the Jordan, following upwards the course of that stream to the Sea of Galilee and further through the marshy pool of Merom to its headwaters, thence descending the gorge of the Leontes to the sea, is less than 150 miles from north to south ("from Dan to Beersheba") and perhaps fifty miles broad at its south base, becoming gradually contracted towards the north; forming practically an acute-angled triangle whose apex is towards the sources of the Jordan.

But this country, small as it is, falls naturally into three divisions, well defined not only in physical characteristics but also, at the date we have to consider, in the peoples inhabiting them.

These divisions, reckoning from the north, are Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa.

Josephus counts in Galilee, about thirty years after the crucifixion, fifteen fortresses and 204 towns and villages; he represents the whole district, although it is mountainous, especially in the north, as densely populated,* and remarks "the ground is most excellently tilled, not a single plot remaining uncultivated."

The valleys possessing the rich loam formed by the disintegration of basalt are singularly fertile, the largest of these being that lying on the southern boundary of the province—the plain of Jezreel—and there is no doubt that in old time terrace cultivation extended up the hill sides.

To the east of the province extends the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Gennesaret (later of Tiberias), a sheet of water about fourteen miles in length with a breadth of from four to seven miles, noted in those days for its prolific fisheries, and destined in spite of its small dimensions to be famous for all time. Yellow limestone cliff, in which igneous rocks have intruded, opening out however in one place into the grassy plain of Gennesaret, occupy the greater part of the western shore of this lake,

* Wars II., 20-6; and III., 3-2.

which at the epoch of the nativity was fringed with populous towns and villages: on the east bank rise the bare craggy basaltic heights of Gaulonitis.

Owing to the extraordinary circumstance that the level of the lake lies nearly 700 feet below the Mediterranean, almost every sub-tropical plant could flourish, the district, according to Josephus, being of marvellous floral richness, with fruits of all kinds in abundance.

The present desolation of this region is certainly the work of man.

The inhabitants of Galilee were ethnologically very mixed: it being on the great highways from Egypt towards Syria and the north, Phœnicians, Syrians, and Greeks had for ages there mingled with the race of Israel, especially in its northern border, "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Thus Zebulun had become quite a Gentile town in appearance, while Sepphoris, as reconstructed a few years later by Antipas, was altogether in the stately style of Rome.

It was, however, on the Lake of Gennesaret that the most important city was to arise. Tiberias, founded also by Antipas, and so named in honour of his Imperial patron, was doubtless in process of construction during the life of Jesus; it was when completed a thoroughly Roman town, with porticoes, palaces, and baths, according to the fashion of the time, and though at first looked at askance by the orthodox Jews, became in a few years the

principal place of the province, with an unrivalled synagogue.

Under these circumstances, the Galileans were comparatively free from the intense national exclusiveness which in secluded Judæa spurned every innovation carried out or even suggested by the detested foreigner ; but though theologically and socially somewhat unprejudiced, they had, from their surroundings, absorbed even more than the ordinary share of superstition from Syria and Phœnicia.

They had the character of being bold in war, excelling in guerilla fighting. "Cowardice was never a failing among the Galileans," says Josephus, who as their general should be a good authority, and this valuation is but a continuance of their old repute, for we read in Judges (v. 18), "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

Their dialect was considered barbarous by the purists of the south,* where they were hardly reckoned as a fully qualified Jewish people : still they were content to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, presenting their offerings, and showed on their side no desire to cast themselves adrift from the dominant section of the race, even when so humble a position was assigned to them. In short, they, as history presents them, appear to have been a hardy, simple, faithful, but densely superstitious people.

* "Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee" (Matt. xxvii. 73).

Between the bold hills of Galilee and the cheerless rocky region of northern Judæa was situated the small fertile and wooded hill and valley district of Samaria, the rich plain of Sharon forming its western portion, peopled by a mongrel race, principally from the Euphrates and beyond, which, by the policy of the Assyrian kings, had been at the time of the deportation of the Israelitish tribes planted in their stead, and which in after years, supplemented by the accession of dissentients and outlaws from Judaism, had made a definite settlement.

Nominally Jewish, that is, adopting the creed and rites of that faith on all occasions when it politically suited them, they were always in feud with Jerusalem, as they claimed what the priesthood could never grant that their mount—Gerizim—was the true place of the national temple, and were also embroiled in a less degree with Galilee, because that dissevered province still held by the superiority of Mount Moriah, the Samaritan people being enabled by their geographical position to hold apart spitefully the two remnants of the Jewish race.

To Rome they owed their national existence, for, as cannot be wondered at, Samaria was favoured by the patronage of the masters of the world, who loathed the censorious malignity of Jerusalem.

Thus when, after the Samaritan capital had been ruthlessly destroyed by John Hyrcanus (about B.C. 110), and the Jews had rejoiced that no man could ever again dwell there, Pompey's legate rebuilt it with far greater dignity than before, and Herod the

Great, as will be seen, made it his favoured dwelling-place, chose a wife from its people, and maintained there a trusty garrison.

The southern portion of the land of the Jews, not only the largest but the most important politically, seeing that it contained the national capital and temple, was unlike in many respects the two more northern divisions. Here the limestone hills are more harsh in outline, more waterless and barren,* rising more steeply from the coast region, the watershed throughout being found, however, towards the east, whence a rapid, often precipitous, decline extends to the Dead Sea.

Jerusalem is situated on the line of the highest ridges of this range, about 2500 feet above sea level, the main road or track southward to Hebron and thence to Petra and the Red Sea being carried along the crests of the hills, for the region dropping abruptly nearly 4000 feet to the Dead Sea is so seamed by deep gullies and gorges that no road could traverse it, and it became (the so-called wilderness of Judæa) a refuge for those who, either as outlaws or Essenes, desired to withdraw themselves from the world; its value for defence being recognised by Herod, who on one of the spurs of these precipitous ledges built his famous palace-fortress and tomb Herodium.

The incline towards the Mediterranean has a

* Strabo (xvi., 2, 36) speaks of the country round Jerusalem as stony and practically valueless, adding that it was hardly worth fighting for; so that unlike Galilee its aspect has little altered from ancient times.

more pleasing aspect, though for a long time in the history of the nation the boundaries of the hill country and the plain had been the scene of deadly strife with the powerful Philistine occupants of the coast. However, in the time of Herod all this region formed part of the Jewish kingdom.

In the south of the province, where the hills are lower till they die away into the rolling steppes of Idumea, an agricultural and pastoral population could well thrive.

Though to the east of the Jordan Herod's kingdom at this time included large territories, none of these lands were exclusively Jewish, the greater portion then belonging neither to their race nor to their religion.

The people which at the period we have to consider inhabited Judæa possessed to an extreme degree the merits and the failings of the race. To a considerable extent the descendants of those whom Cyrus's merciful decree had permitted to return from Babylonia and to rebuild their temple, the Judæans, were now, as their own writers depict them, as strongly marked by an unswerving adherence to the worship of Jehovah as they had been previous to that national catastrophe by a readiness to desert his worship for that of strange Gods.

The frequent "going up" to Jerusalem for the feasts—an obligation upon earnest Israelites not too far removed locally—must have been of great pecuniary value to a district geographically quite

apart from the track of commerce and agriculturally of little value, tending also to enrich the large class which, either connected with the temple observance or with the teaching of the law, were resident in the capital. The temple tribute alone must have been of great importance, for their people throughout Asia as far as the Euphrates, and even in the cities of the west, contributed to it, and putting aside all other gains, from sacrifices, offerings, fines, &c., must have afforded a princely income to the important priestly families.

THE JEWISH SECTS.

The three principal Jewish sects—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes—probably had their origin, or at all events were developed, during the time of the Maccabean revolution; a period in which, as a protest against the de-nationalising plans of Antiochus Epiphanes, a great religious revival took place.

The *Pharisees*, whatever their origin, had in the time of Christ grown into a community which rigorously demanded from its adherents the closest observance of the Mosaical law or “Thora,” even in the most minute details, but not satisfied with this, as time went on, the meaning of the sacred text, which alone was the subject of study, was extended, distorted, and perverted; ingenious but far-fetched interpretations establishing a long list of novel requirements often of an absurd nature. That a grave discussion is recorded on the momentous

question whether it was lawful or unlawful to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath suffices to show the length to which this hair-splitting was carried, and when it is remembered that to these extensions of the Mosaical laws a host of obligatory ceremonies and observances were added, which, though they had no warrant in the sacred pages, had been consecrated by long usage (the so-called tradition), it will be admitted that the demands of the Pharisaic code were impossible of realisation in practical life. Not without a leaven of the Hellenic and Egyptian learning that had spread through Israel, in spite of its exclusiveness, since the time of the Seleucidæ, the Pharisees maintained the doctrine of a future life and a spiritual and angelic world, while they believed that the absolute compliance of their race in all the minutiae of ceremonial would render them at last acceptable to Jehovah, and thus enable them, with His mighty help, to obtain the exalted position among the nations of the world that they had always aspired to and were unwearied in prophesying.

Josephus (Ant. xiii., 10, 5), speaking of the Pharisees, says:—"These have so great a power over the multitude that when they say anything against the king or against the High Priest they are at once believed."

In marked contrast with this narrow-minded but energetic and intensely national party were the *Sadducees*, usually to be found among the more highly educated and enlightened of the nation.

They are stated to have acknowledged as an authority only the written Mosaical law, which also they did not push to its extreme limits, rejecting all forced conclusions drawn from it ; they did not accept the dogma of the resurrection, for which they found no warrant in the sacred books, and had no belief in the spiritual world. Their party was, in fact, of the old faith of Israel before the captivity, the infiltration of Greek culture having, however, introduced the germs of an alien philosophy, for the noble doctrine which was attributed to the sect that good deeds must be done without hope of reward has a Stoic flavour.

As may be supposed, this party, with its purely negative views, had little influence among the people ; while the opportunism which led it to make peace with Rome, and to excuse or condone the encroachments, often unintentional, that that dominant power was not unfrequently making on the religious conscience and susceptibilities of the Jews, created a national prejudice against it which was to have momentous consequences.

The *Essenes*, whose colonies at the time of Jesus occupied some of the deep ravines and gorges, which, reaching from the watershed of Judea eastward, descended precipitously to the Dead Sea, had chosen that wild and unfrequented region because from its remoteness from every line of commercial intercourse it enabled them to practice without interruption their peculiar tenets, for they held that it was impossible, except apart from the world, to obtain the absolute

physical and moral purity that they deemed obligatory. Their communities must have resembled in a great measure, the vast monastic establishments that arose in Egypt several centuries later, or those which were found in the Middle Ages planted in every country of the west. Continual ablutions in cold water, a strictly ascetic fare, in most cases limited to vegetable food, and eaten in common, incessant study of the sacred books to the exclusion of all others, and manual labour confined almost entirely to agricultural work owing to the restrictions they had imposed upon themselves, occupied their lives. But there were not wanting more extreme members of the sect, who contended that the ideal of absolute purity could be attained only by complete isolation from their fellow-men, and these occupying solitary caves in that wild region, and maintaining their existence upon roots and herbs, passed their lives as anchorites, being highly venerated by the populace as holy men and prophets. It is a remarkable, almost inexplicable, fact that the Essenes are never mentioned in the Gospels, Acts, or Epistles of Paul, though their tenets were in many respects so closely allied to those of the Baptist, and indeed of Jesus.

Behind these three distinctive sects comes the great mass of the Jewish people, for the most part densely ignorant, prejudiced, fanatical, superstitious, and animated by a rancorous hatred of the foreigner and all his works, these attributes being most strongly accentuated among the Judæan tribes.

How was it possible that the Roman with his

practical view of life and its duties could appreciate or indeed comprehend the complex religious prejudices of this people, with whom the whole existence from birth till death, every action, every thought, was bound up in an ideal and yet rigorous sacerdotal formula, the definition of which was year by year extending, thanks to the perverse ingenuity of the Rabbis, so as to keep pace with and neutralise the liberating movement of civilisation ? *

The Romans justifiably held the opinion that the Hebrew law was expressly framed to foster hatred of the outside world.

When money became unclean if it had an Emperor's head upon it, when wine and oil might not be bought and used from Gentiles, when wood which might have been used for idolatrous rites was to be shunned, no bread baked from it to be eaten, no cloth woven by a shuttle made of it to be worn, &c., &c., can we wonder at the mingled astonishment and disgust of the tolerant pagans, or that the more absurd aspects of this exclusiveness were a never failing source of laughter on their stage.

The Roman satirists found in the Jewish law and its prohibitions ample subjects for contemptuous gibes—the rigour of Sabbath observance, the peculiar physical rite, the immunity of the pig, the restrictions

* We can imagine the astonishment of Herod's Roman allies, at the time of his siege of his own capital (B.C. 37), when the besieged actually ask that a free passage may be granted through the lines for the beasts destined for the daily sacrifices, and when the Jewish prisoners request permission to visit the Temple on the Sabbath to perform their devotions !

in intercourse with other nations, all came under their scornful notice; men of graver repute, such as Cicero and Tacitus, alike show their instinctive repulsion, while even from the tolerant Marcus Aurelius was elicited during his passage through Palestine the impatient outburst, "O Quadi! O Sarmatae! at length I have found a people more degraded even than you."*

The demand by the Jerusalem leaders, sacerdotal, legal, and Pharisaic, for the restoration of the Theocracy under the direct overlordship of Rome, made not only to Antony after his victory over the republicans, but again to Augustus while the succession to the kingdom of Herod was in the balance, was, though disguised, a purely personal application that all their ancient influence, monetary, political, and social, should be restored and secured.

Under cover of the name of Jehovah, the nominal head of the wished-for state, they could have wielded the immense influence due to their ecclesiastical dignity and legal learning, without fear of any check from the temporal authorities, for they knew that tribute being forthcoming and no interference being offered to the military powers they could reap the whole of the rich harvest to be gathered from the devotion of the race to the Holy City and its Temple.

That the enormous tributary offerings of the

* Cæsar is an exception; he befriended the Jews and granted valuable privileges to their scattered communities. But he had been materially assisted while in great straits at Alexandria, by a Jewish contingent headed by Antipater, and did not forget the service; besides in intellect as well as magnanimity he was far in advance of his day.

people and of the *diaspori* were at this period devoted wholly or even mainly to the service of the Temple and the legitimate needs of those who officiated is in the highest degree improbable, as also is the suggestion that the punctilious observance held by the Pharisees was alone actuated by religious zeal, for only a generation later we find Jesus putting the question, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute—of their own children or of strangers?"—a question which could not have been asked by him, or even attributed to him, if the maintenance of the dignity of public worship had alone been in question; while his vigorous denunciations of the Pharisaic party,* who "devour widows' houses," who pray and fast so as to be seen of men, who give alms to the sound of the trumpet, in short, who are "whited sepulchres," throw a strong side-light on the grasping self-interest that underlay the formal and pretentious piety of that group.

* "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites!" declared Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORICAL SURROUNDINGS OF THE NATIVITY CONTINUED.

LIFE OF HEROD THE GREAT—HIS CHARACTER.

IT would appear that as far back as the days of Judas Maccabeus, about B.C. 160, an alliance was ratified between the rapidly advancing Roman Republic and the Hebrew nation, a singularly clear account of it being found in I. Maccabees, viii.; but in spite of the continual penetration eastward of Roman influence it was only a century later, when the last members of the ruling Asmonæan family quarrelled among themselves, that its authority gained a firm footing in Palestine.

Pompey, when the death of Mithridates had removed the most capable and implacable enemy of Rome (B.C. 64), set to work to reorganise Syria and the surrounding countries, deliberately separating, blending, and reserving territory, so as to efface old nationalities, foster jealousies, and generally render intrigue or combination against Rome difficult if not impossible.

In Palestine the contention for the throne of the Asmonæans between the sons of Alexander Jannæus

had given the opportunity for the Romans to introduce themselves as arbitrators. Hyrcanus the elder had to content himself with the high-priesthood, while his energetic younger brother Aristobulus was acknowledged King, a marriage between Alexander, the son of the latter, and Alexandra, the daughter of Hyrcanus, being supposed to close the feud.

At this time a chief adviser of Hyrcanus was an Idumean Arab, Antipater, a son of one who had great influence in that region, and some obscure intrigue which history does not explain caused Hyrcanus, under the suggestion of personal danger, to flee from Jerusalem to Petra, whence he was brought back as the nominal head of an Arab army, which besieged Jerusalem, then held by his brother.

Pompey now again intervened ; his legate required both parties to withdraw ; the Arab auxiliaries obeyed, but Aristobulus still held out in Jerusalem, and the siege of the Temple was a lengthy matter, ending with the memorable entry of Pompey and his officers into the Holy of Holies, an act which deeply shocked the religious susceptibilities of the Jews.

Hyrcanus was now named High Priest and Ethnarch, the title of King being abolished ; the range of his jurisdiction was limited on every side, even Samaria being held by the pro-consul Gabinius, who greatly favoured that district, always antagonistic to Judæa. Aristobulus was sent to Rome, and his son Alexander, who headed an insurrection, was routed after having obtained some successes.

In consequence of this last revolt, Gabinius

decided to break up still more the political system in Palestine, so that, divided into petty republics, the country should have no cohesion, and this was done.

Aristobulus, who had escaped from Rome, and also his son, Alexander, made attempts at revolution, both being, however, quickly repressed ; Antipater, who was the controller of the policy of Hyrcanus, by his firmness and dexterity retaining the friendship of the Romans as well as of his Arab kindred.

The civil war—Pompey v. Cæsar (B.C. 49), in spite of an attempt on Palestine by Aristobulus under the patronage of Cæsar, which, though with help of two of his legions, fell through owing to the death of the pretender, brought no great result to the Jewish nation until the victory of Pharsalia (B.C. 48) had given Cæsar the supremacy ; who, hastening to Egypt as arbitrator in the contest for the Egyptian throne with a very inadequate force, was exposed to great peril from the combination of the insurgents of Alexandria with the Egyptian regulars.

Antipater by a rapid march with some picked troops and Arab auxiliaries was enabled to assist in succouring Cæsar from a position of extreme danger ; the death of the youthful Ptolemy ending the war, leaving his sister the young Cleopatra, who speedily enslaved the victor, the sole claimant.

Cæsar did not overlook this timely service on the part of the Idumean, which in his practical mind fully condoned any former opposition, for he was now recognised as administrator of the country, a position

which rendered him independent of his nominal chief; while the range of his authority was considerably extended, the petty republics of Gabinius being suppressed.

Judaea and Galilee were now placed in charge of Phasael and Herod, his two eldest sons; Herod, the second son of four by a Bedouin mother, soon showing his martial spirit and tactical skill by breaking up a band of freebooters who infested the spurs of Hermon, and were a perpetual anxiety to the traders of Damascus whom they pillaged; he thus earned the thanks and goodwill of the Syrian pro-consul, who subsequently, on the occasion of his being called to account by the Jerusalem Sanhedrim for illegal execution of the chief of the robber bands (an orthodox Jew), upheld him and soon made over to him the administration of Cœle-Syria and Samaria, to be held directly from Rome, thus withdrawing him absolutely from their authority.

The assassination of their patron Cæsar (B.C. 44) was a terrible blow to both brothers. Antony, who had some years before made the acquaintance of their father, would probably stand their friend, but the forces of the republicans were nearer to Palestine, and had to be reckoned with, so Cassius was appeased by the ready payment of an unexampled war indemnity, and Herod, whose military skill and lack of scruple would be of service, was maintained in his position, the control of Judaea being even added.

The national schemes against Roman supremacy now culminated in a plot to make away with

Antipater, the hated Idumean and friend of the Romans, who finally succumbed to poison, while now and again futile attempts against the dominant power were made, one of which Herod, by his warlike resource under difficult circumstances, succeeded in crushing, meeting again in Jerusalem his old chief, the patron of his father, the high priest Hyrcanus.

The battle of Philippi (B.C. 42) annihilated the republican party, but the position was again a critical one for Herod and his brother, who had contributed to the war-chest of Cassius. Cleopatra, who had been steeped in intrigue from her earliest years, and who had lived with Cæsar at Rome from 44 to 42 B.C., had in the capital again met an old acquaintance of Alexandria, the brilliant cavalry officer Antony, his friend and later his colleague in the triumvirate. Like Herod, the nearness of the republican legions had made her a nominal partisan of their cause, and in this capacity she was summoned, as were the other potentates of the East, to explain or defend her conduct towards his party at his court, then held at Tarsus in Cilicia.

The drama has reproduced the incidents of this meeting, when the Queen, attired as Venus, surrounded by cupids and nymphs, obeyed his command. She gained her cause—she was not twenty-eight years old—and Antony became her slave, having henceforth but one thought, to hasten all affairs and join his deity in Alexandria.

As Antony had in spite of a hostile deputation of Jews confirmed Herod, who had not presented

himself empty-handed, in his position, as well as his brother Phasael, an intrigue with the Parthians, who through a belated scheme of the republicans had then invaded Syria and Asia Minor, was entered into by the partisans of the Asmonæan dynasty. The Parthian horsemen, owing to the supineness of Antony, now under the enervating influence of Cleopatra, overran Palestine and secured the Temple of Jerusalem through the support of the populace, in spite of the efforts of Herod and his brother Phasael, who held the citadel.

If history may be trusted, a foul scheme under the pretence of negotiation decoyed Phasael away to the Parthian camp, where he soon died a prisoner, but he had been enabled to send warning to Herod, who avoided the snare, sent off his family and belongings to the Dead Sea fortress, Masada, under the care of a younger brother, Joseph, and though hard pressed, was able to make good his own retreat.

The Parthians had meanwhile been engaged in plundering the city, outraging the women, and ravaging the entire country in the name of Antigonus, the second son of the deposed Aristobulus, whom they had placed as a puppet on the throne, his uncle, Hyrcanus, who had been captured, being sent to the Euphrates.

Herod as a fugitive failed to enlist his Bedouin kinsmen in his cause ; he then tried Egypt, where the Queen was ready enough to employ him, knowing as she did his military talents, but he hoped for

better things at Rome, and in spite of risk of shipwreck was able to reach that city.

Both Octavius and Antony proved friendly ; the former had not forgotten how the father of the suppliant had in the hour of dire need come to the rescue of his grand-uncle at Alexandria, while Antony also could hardly be unmindful of his old friendship for Antipater.

Herod was thus enabled to take back with him to Palestine the appointment to the kingdom of the Jews (B.C. 39). However, he had first to conquer his kingdom, no easy task, though fortunately the victories of Ventidius over the Parthians were rapidly clearing Palestine of those marauders.

The King began with Joppa, storming it and thus securing a sea-base, he then marched to Masada to the relief of his brother, who was still shut up there, and raised the siege. Samaria, which, as we have already said, he had for some time administered directly under Rome, where he was popular, and where the people, never forgetting their grievances against the Maccabean dynasty, including the former ruthless destruction of their capital, would do anything to prevent its return, gave him no trouble ; so that, leaving his family in their charge, his next move was to Galilee to break up the robber-bands that infested the province and flourished on the disasters of the time.

This he effectually did, and then turned southward to Jerusalem, in the campaign being nominally supported by a Roman detachment from the Syrian

legions ; but these auxiliaries proved rather a hindrance than a help, for their commanders showed themselves more anxious to prolong a little war in which they were able to take money from either side than to terminate too abruptly this profitable state of things.

After two years of arduous campaigning Herod's energy at length prevailed, and Jerusalem was his (B.C. 37), though at first the kingdom of which he had completed the conquest proved almost valueless, so deeply had war, civil dissension, and rapine impoverished it. Thus a rigorous proscription, with the confiscation of the property of those opposed to him (on the Roman model), alone afforded to the King the means of meeting the enormous pecuniary demands of the insatiable Antony.*

By degrees the firm government of Herod made matters somewhat improve, and the King would have had leisure and means to develop his kingdom were it not that Cleopatra, who now absolutely controlled, and indeed dictated, the policy of Antony, had obtained from him a grant of Syrian territory north of Galilee, and she was now laying claim to Idumea as an ancient possession of the Ptolemies, hoping besides, by influencing her lover against the Jewish

* No indictment that can here be drawn against Herod can shut out the names of his patrons Antony and Augustus, who used the same methods of proscription and confiscation ; it was but the fashion of the time of which the King had exemplars all round him, and he was neither better nor worse than those of his epoch ; besides he gained nothing personally except the obloquy—all the plunder went to Antony !

King, to secure his deposition and the gift of his kingdom, which now lay between her possessions in Syria and her own country of Egypt.

In this scheme she succeeded so far that Antony awarded to her the whole coast line from Egypt to Syria (saving Tyre and Sidon), on the pretext that she must have a land passage to her new Syrian domains; she also obtained a valuable territory by Jericho, and Herod, deeply as he was chagrined by the dismemberment of his realm, was powerless to prevent it.

Fortunately for him events were rapidly ripening; the shameful flight from Actium (B.C. 31) at once changed the face of affairs and Herod was enabled, by timely desertion of the cause of Antony and by opportunely compassing the surrender of a band of veterans who were hastening to his aid, to make peace with Octavius, now to be called Augustus, who was far too cool and shrewd a statesman to look closely into old grievances when he had obtained a useful partisan, one who in all his tergiversations had at least been true to Rome, and who was palpably bound to him by the closest bonds of self-interest.

Thus in the new settlement that was everywhere made, Herod, to the dismay of his enemies, received back his kingdom, strengthened by the restoration of the part filched by Cleopatra, and by the gift of other valuable territories principally east of the Jordan.

A little before this period of Herod's life, he, finding his claim to the throne stubbornly rejected by the Jerusalem leaders, had the thought of recalling

from the Euphrates the aged Hyrcanus, with whom he had throughout cultivated friendly relations ; who, though he was unfortunately incapacitated from again holding the high priesthood, the vengeance of the ephemeral king put up by the Parthians having deprived him of his ears, this mutilation being according to Jewish law an insuperable obstacle to his holding that dignity, was yet held by many as the rightful possessor of the crown.

A palace intrigue, with the object of making away with Herod, in which Hyrcanus was supposed to be implicated, ended in the old man (he was eighty years of age) being executed.

Josephus wishes it to be inferred that Hyrcanus was recalled from Babylon for this very purpose ; but this is highly improbable, for he was there far removed from Hebrew politics and quite innocuous. It is far more likely that Herod miscalculated the effect of his return, and the use that would be made of his name by the disaffected.

The pacification of the world, the *pax Romana*, inaugurated and ever after zealously enforced by Augustus, marked the term of Herod's serious troubles from causes exterior to his own realm, the last quarter of a century of his life being in that respect uneventful. At intervals his Imperial patron handed over to him new territories, north and east, thus making him at last one of the most powerful of the dependent allies of Rome, ruling over a larger domain than any of his predecessors had done, and though an estrangement, owing to Herod's repelling

by force of arms perpetual and irritating encroachments on his Arabian frontier, to be presently referred to, for a short time obscured the good feeling existing between the fanatically peace-loving Emperor and his protégé, the difficulty was cleared up and the old relations permanently restored.

With the cessation of civil strife throughout the entire Empire, and of war on its borders, came the revival of commerce, with the resulting prosperity, even the remote land of the Jews participating in this. Then, in unison with the spirit of his Imperial master, did Herod, with the aid of Greek and Roman engineers and architects, set to work to develop the resources of his Kingdom, great public works being undertaken.

And first he looked to the security of the country ; he fortified the Arabian frontier, especially in the Dead Sea district, and having again cleared Galilee and the region north-east of the Jordan of brigandage, established forts with military colonies on the model of those of Rome in those unsettled provinces.

He then greatly strengthened the defences of Jerusalem and reconstructed those of Samaria, his real stronghold, on an important scale.

After this, as revenues improved, city after city of his own as well as of Syria, and even of Greece, was indebted to the Jewish King for costly works ; but the most valuable and enduring gift to his own country was the construction of the important artificial harbour of Cæsarea, which for centuries

afterwards was the centre of sea-borne trade to Palestine, supplying the want that had been felt for ages of a secure haven on that inhospitable coast.

By his influence with the powerful Agrippa, the Minister and afterwards the son-in-law of Augustus, Herod was able to obtain for the dispersed Jewish communities in the cities of Asia, &c., the ratification of the privileges bestowed on them by the first Cæsar, which the Gentile municipalities had withdrawn or attenuated, the people of Jerusalem on this occasion actually thanking him for his successful exertions on behalf of their dispersed countrymen, as they also did when during the terrible failure of crops and consequent famine of the year B.C. 25, the energy and influence of the King secured a large supply of Egyptian corn, which proved of the greatest value to the suffering people.

Through the accession to so many Gentile districts a great building movement in the latest style of Rome was in progress in Herod's dominions; theatres, gymnasia, baths, and even temples were erected and public games inaugurated and subsidised by the King. In Jerusalem he built a palace and even a theatre, to the great scandal of the sacerdotal powers.

But though it was almost impracticable to benefit his capital by many public works owing to the ingrained prejudice which viewed any imitation of the heathen style even in architecture with horror, there was yet one mode left in which the King felt that he could embellish Jerusalem without wounding

the exclusive national spirit. It was by rebuilding the Temple on a far more magnificent plan.

All agreed that the existing structure, raised by the feeble and impoverished community that had returned from Babylon, was unworthy of its site and the dignity of Jehovah ; but the priesthood distrusted the King, and it was only when he had assented to every minute precaution that their fastidious scruples could suggest, even to the training (at his own expense) of a large number of priests as masons and carpenters, so that the new inner sanctuary should not be touched by lay hands, and his promise had been given that no stone in the existing structure should be disturbed till all the blocks for the new building should be ready wrought for fitting in their places, that a final assent was given to the project.

Though a work of years, the new magnificent building, based upon immense substructures to afford a larger platform on the summit of the hill, was at length finished, every priestly requirement having been adhered to, and it was consecrated with great splendour ; still Herod, by placing over the entrance-gate a golden eagle in deference to his patron and master, the Imperator, again outraged the sentiment of the zealots who deemed contrary to the law the representation of any living thing.

As the anxieties and perils of Herod's political life were but as dust in the balance when weighed against the troubles with which he had to contend in the circle of his own Kingdom and his own

household, it will now be necessary, if we are to fairly judge his actions, to refer to the domestic life of the King, and the obscure intrigues which, mainly the result of his Arab custom of polygamy, were destined to destroy his peace of mind, and dismember at his death his laboriously built-up realm.

He had when young married Doris, who seems to have been of no important family, having by her a son—Antipater.

When the crown and the chance of transmitting it were within his view, love and policy alike prompted a marriage with the beautiful Mariamne, a daughter of the Maccabean race, such an alliance apparently rendering his position more secure as well as acceptable to the people. This union, delayed by the episode of the Parthian invasion, was at length consummated, and it is not to be wondered at that Doris and her boy were before long driven from the court, and that Mariamne's mother, Alexandra, and her younger brother, Aristobulus, were installed there, also that by the influence of both women the young man, though far below the legal age, was nominated High-priest.

Herod now found to his dismay that a section of the people favoured the view that Aristobulus, an actual descendant of the Maccabees, was in strict legal right King as well as High-priest.

After much estrangement from this cause a reconciliation was supposed to be effected, and at a meeting in the Palace Gardens of Jericho, Josephus (in a very

obscure passage) tells us that, Herod and his guests being heated and fatigued, a bath in the pool in the grounds was suggested ; that Aristobulus gambolling in the water with others in the retinue of the King, he was apparently in sport but really designedly held down beneath the surface till drowned ; that Herod at once expressed the greatest sorrow at the calamity, but that Mariamne was convinced that her brother was murdered by his orders, from that time feeling a repugnance towards him.*

From this time till the end, the court of the King was the theatre of a deadly woman's battle, though it is impossible here in a few lines to follow the intricate tangle of plot and counter-plot elaborately reported by Josephus. Salome, the shrewd but amorous and intriguing sister of Herod, was outraged by the supercilious affectations of superiority taken up by Mariamne and her mother.

* Such a murder, owing to the necessity of its appearing an accident, would be most difficult of execution. The King *must* have previously given instructions to the chosen perpetrators, though hardly able to foresee the intended victim's movements, no compulsion being possible. Moreover, the story would not be likely to be disclosed by the various murderers during the life of the King.

It was *Cleopatra*, Herod's inveterate enemy, who brought forward the charge against him. She had received letters from Alexandra and Mariamne, her secret correspondents, and though it is improbable that these women could give any evidence beyond their own suspicions, she was ready, with or without corroboration, to forward any damaging statements to her lover Antony in the hope that he might be induced to depose or put to death the Jewish King, of whose dominions she was notoriously covetous.

Josephus, moreover, in his "Wars," written some years earlier, has quite another story. We may safely say that if Aristobulus was done to death at all, this was not the manner of it.

It was opportunely discovered by the other side that they were corresponding and scheming with Cleopatra, and at last the beautiful Queen was charged with love intrigue and unfaithfulness during one of the absences of her husband.

She was tried (we do not know under what circumstances) and was found guilty by her judges, it is stated with the acquiescence of her mother! being after many intervals of indecision ordered for execution by her husband, who, we are told, was afterwards so visited by remorse that his mind and life were equally in danger.

While this illness was in progress Alexandra threw off the mask, and attempted to seize the principal forts that guarded the capital, in the name of her daughter's two children, Alexander and Aristobulus, as the heirs of the Asmonæans, but Herod unexpectedly recovered, and she was arrested and put to death.*

Before this, by another marriage with a native of his favourite province Samaria, Herod had had two sons, Archelaus and Antipas, who, less connected

* If Mariamne believed that her husband had murdered her brother, thenceforth detesting him, and then corresponded, along with her mother, with his arch-enemy Cleopatra, making this charge against him so as to render his death or deposition by Antony possible; and if, after her execution, her mother was able *at once* to initiate a revolution and seize several forts—a result showing previous preparation—all of which is vouched for by Josephus, is it so improbable that she had conspired or was unfaithful during the absences of the King, on the last of which disappointment was felt when the report that he had been summarily beheaded by Antony proved false? Yet modern authors assume her innocence as undoubted.

with the palace intrigues, being educated privately at Rome, were able to succeed him ultimately in two of the divisions of his shattered kingdom. He also took in later years to wife Cleopatra, a woman of Jerusalem of great beauty, having by her a son—Philip—whose character, more peaceful than that of most of the family, enabled him to escape the dangers of the time, and finally to have as his share the northern portion of the dismembered kingdom ; and it may here be mentioned there were other wives who, with their children, are not of moment in this history.

When, after several years, the children of Mariamne were growing up, their father's patron Augustus being firmly fixed upon the throne, they were taken to Rome for education, but in spite of their absence the household of the King still ranged itself into two camps, those who favoured the family of Herod by his wives other than Mariamne, and those who contended for the sole legitimacy of Alexander and Aristobulus, the one side being headed by Salome, while the opposite party had the silent but effectual support of the King's younger brother Pheroras, who, under the dominion of a crafty wife of the lower order who revered the Pharisees, was always intriguing in their interests, being influenced by the decision to which after grave debate they had arrived, that they were able to recognise the legitimacy of the sons of Mariamne, while they denied that of their father.

At last, when the sons of Mariamne returned

from Italy with the Roman culture and some of its vices, and by their father's wish had both married, things among the women got to such a pass that Herod hit upon the scheme of recalling Doris and her son, thinking to prove to the young men and their wives that they were on their good behaviour, and must not count on the succession as a right.

This was again a disastrous determination, for Antipater (Doris's son), who had grown up in obscurity nursing his wrongs and feeling that his natural position had been lost through the interlopers Mariamne and her children, immediately set to work to rouse his father's suspicions against the young men.

This proved an easy task, for Alexander, outspoken from inexperience and want of acquaintance with the duplicity of the East, was no match for the wily intriguer. All sorts of schemes for the seizure of the crown were hinted at as in progress, until Herod in desperation took his sons with him to Rome and laid his case before Augustus, who, after reprimanding the young men, effected a reconciliation.

But it had now transpired that, with the Imperator's sanction, Herod had arranged that his eldest son should have the first reversion to his crown, a heavy blow to the sons of Mariamne, and on the return to Palestine the old whispered suspicions and accusations were as rife as ever.

However, Archelaus, King of Cappadocia, whose daughter Glaphyra was married to Alexander, the

elder of the two brothers, succeeded while on a visit to Herod in effecting once more (by dexterous cajoleries, as Josephus explains) a temporary reconciliation between father and sons, and the Jewish King going once more to Rome so as to explain more fully what he had previously written respecting the palace plots, accompanied his guest on his return home to Cappadocia as far as Antioch, where he was enabled to return his apparent good offices by composing a difference which that monarch had had with Titius, the Syrian president.

It is now needful to refer in rather fuller detail to the crowded events in Palestine between B.C. 9 and 4, as the incidents and their dates have a direct bearing on the Gospel narratives.

When Herod started for Rome the King of Arabia, Obodas, a feeble monarch, was in the hands of his principal Minister and adviser, Sylleus, a young, energetic, and ambitious man, who probably hoped to obtain the succession to the crown.

On an occasion of visiting the Jewish court Sylleus had bethought him of a scheme of marrying Salome, the King's sister, then a widow, who was nothing loth, but Herod from some cause raising religious difficulties the match was broken off.

During Herod's absence in Italy troubles broke out among the wild tribes of Trachonitis, a comparatively new accretion to his kingdom which Augustus had bestowed.

It had been reported that he was dead, and

brigandage, which he had firmly suppressed, was again flourishing.

The King's commanders in his absence subdued the robber bands, but some escaped to Arabia, where Sylleus, to spite Herod on account of his refusal to accept him as brother-in-law, gave them a stronghold within his frontier from which they could make incursions. This affair was further complicated on Herod's return by a debt of sixty talents that Obodas had borrowed from him through the instrumentality of Sylleus, and of which payment could not be obtained.

Sylleus, summoned by Sentius Saturninus, the new President of Syria, to carry out his bond, and also to give up the robbers (who were Herod's subjects), obtained a respite of thirty days, before which time he swore to redeem both pledges ; but instead of complying, started for Rome to appeal to Augustus.

Herod, with Saturninus's permission, crossed the frontier to destroy the robber stronghold and to levy for his debt, and on the Arabian regulars interfering, a skirmish took place, their general and a few others being slain.

Sylleus at Rome was soon made acquainted with what had happened, and, attired as a suppliant, gained an audience of the Imperator, in which he greatly exaggerated the encounter which had occurred, and represented that Arabia had been overrun with fire and sword, adding that he would not have dared to quit his country for awhile but for

his absolute confidence that the power of Rome would shelter it in his absence.

Augustus, greatly moved, inquired of Herod's representatives whether any collision had in fact occurred, and as they were unable to deny this was deeply offended, writing to Herod "that whereas of old he had treated him as a friend, he should now use him as a subject." This success so encouraged Sylleus and his party that the raids on Herod's territory were incessant, while in a great measure his Government was paralysed from the fear that any resistance might be further misinterpreted at Rome.

Obodas, the nominal King of the Arabians, then died, Aretas succeeding him, against whom Sylleus and his friends at Rome forthwith began a campaign of calumny, so that the new King was forced to have his cause represented there by envoys, through whom he charged Sylleus with poisoning his predecessor, besides other crimes.

Augustus, however, would not listen to this appeal, the result being that, both Kings being powerless, complete anarchy reigned in Palestine and Arabia.

But Herod was now desperate, and sent another ambassador, his counsellor Nicolaus (a *persona grata* at the Imperial court) (see page 11), who chose a favourable opportunity during the hearing of a joint complaint against Sylleus to introduce indirectly and adroitly Herod's matter, and on being challenged, to explain the true history, on which the incident was further looked into, and Sylleus, who could not substantiate his story and was proved guilty of other

misdeeds, was condemned, the Imperator telling him that "he had compelled him by his lies to be guilty of ingratitude towards a man who was his friend."

Nicolaus had proved to him that Sylleus had repeatedly come before the President of Syria and had finally sworn by the most binding oaths to make speedy restitution, the deeds of covenant as to the money borrowed, and the permit to enforce the claim granted to Herod by his own official, along with the petitions of the towns plundered by the robber bands, being produced before the Imperator.

Thus the breach was definitely closed, and on Herod's death, about four years later, Augustus, in spite of all opposition, respected, as will be seen, his final distribution of his kingdom and carried it through.

While Herod was under a cloud with Augustus many noteworthy events were happening in Judæa; the most intricate palace intrigues had been going on, accusations and counter-accusations, in which the names of the two sons of Mariamne were again introduced, as aiming to secure the crown.

As far as can be judged these unfortunate young men were at least very imprudent in such an atmosphere of knavery. It became, however, fairly manifest that Archelaus of Cappadocia, the peace-maker, had not told all he knew, so Herod at last wrote letters to Augustus, in spite of his disgrace, detailing the further evidence which had come to light and asking for permission to punish.

These letters he entrusted to envoys, who were not to seek an audience and produce them except in the case that Nicolaus had been able to appease the Imperator.

On that result being obtained and their presenting their letters, Augustus granted the authority asked for, suggesting merely that Herod should associate with himself as assessors the pro-prætor Saturninus and any other influential friends; but the crown of Arabia, a further advancement, which before the occurrence of this last incident he had resolved to give him as an addition to his kingdom (the new King of that country having displeased him), he did not now bestow, as he considered that the difficulties that Herod experienced in his own family rendered such a step unadvisable.

Herod, on obtaining his overlord's permission, at once convened the assembly at Berytus of the commission to try his sons, according to Josephus acting most intemperately in charging them; Saturninus condemned, but counselled moderate measures; his procurator Volumnius, however, voted for severity, and it appears that, possibly from desire to agree with Herod, the majority were of that view.

While Herod was undecided what he should do, an injudicious defence of the young men by Tero, one of his old captains, still further provoked him, and matters were brought to a climax when the royal barber told a tale how Tero had several times suggested that the King's throat might be

cut with a razor, promising in that case great rewards from Alexander. On this, Herod determined to put both the young men out of the way, and they were at once executed, Josephus adding the singularly improbable story that three hundred officers implicated in the cross accusations were brought out before the people, who “stoned them with whatsoever came to hand, and thereby slew them.”

Antipater, the prime intriguer, who had now made clear his succession to the throne, and who was so adroit as to be thoroughly in his father’s confidence, and entrusted with a share of the government, was not yet secure while the King lived, for any time his schemes might be brought to light ; he therefore made large presents to Saturninus and to his friends at the court of Augustus to ensure their goodwill. He also made a tool of Pheroras, the King’s younger brother, who was under the influence of his low-born and designing wife, who, with her mother, dominated him. Antipater, who was suspected of improper relations with the wife, obtained from her news of all that went on in Pheroras’s household. Her respect for the Pharisees was profound, and these sectaries suggested to her that by Divine inspiration they foreknew that Herod’s posterity should not come to the throne, but that her husband and herself would do so, all this being detected by the watchful Salome, who informed her brother.

Thereupon, according to Josephus, Herod slew the Pharisees “who had been convicted of those

crimes," also the chief eunuch Bagoas and another palace official implicated ; but Pheroras and the women of his family received no punishment. It is true Josephus then adds, "He slew also all those of his own *family* who had consented to what the Pharisees had foretold," but with Pheroras, his wife, her mother, and sister spared, as well as Doris (who had been mixed up in the affair), it is not at all clear who they could be !*

The King, after vainly trying to induce his brother to cast off his wife, the source of all the trouble, contented himself with ordering him to retire to his own tetrarchy of Peræa.

Antipater was now more and more uneasy from dread of something coming to light, and wrote to his friends at Rome that they should try to obtain an order from Augustus that he should be sent to him. This was obtained, and Herod, nothing suspecting, fitted him out lavishly, stating, moreover, to the Imperator his desire that he should be considered his successor.

Soon afterwards Pheroras died, after a very short illness, the King in spite of their disagreement visiting him in his tetrarchy, and on his death reverently caring for his funeral, but in a few days two of Pheroras's household came to Herod and told him that his brother had been poisoned by his wife

* If one may hazard a conjecture, it is that Josephus, writing in Rome after a long residence, had in his mind the term "familia," there universally used to designate the entire domestic household, and unconsciously used a Greek word capable of a more restricted meaning.

with a so-called love potion. Torture was as usual in that age used upon some of the female servants, and by degrees Antipater and his mother Doris were implicated, it being fairly evident that the poison was intended for him (Herod), and by their connivance. He also found that his eldest son had played him false, for a certain matter which he had confided to him, charging him not to divulge, was well known in Pheroras's circle.

Plenty of evidence now poured in on all sides as to Antipater's treachery, and of his schemes against his brothers till he had procured their deaths.

All this corroborated what Salome had often told the King, but he had not fully credited ; so he sent Doris away from the palace, and on one of Antipater's freedmen coming from Rome he was arrested, and another potion, to be used if the first miscarried, was found on him.

Herod, now fully informed, wrote to his son at Rome requesting his early return, though saying nothing of the momentous discoveries that had been made.

But Antipater was already on his journey back ; he learned at Tarentum of Pheroras's death without having carried out the scheme of poisoning Herod ; later on, touching at Celenderis in Cilicia, he found his father's letter, which informed him, though in very qualified terms, that his mother was out of favour. He now suspected danger, but he had been so hated in Palestine that although his guilt had been notorious for the last seven months no definite

warning reached him, and he resumed his voyage, landing at Cæsarea.

Having once entered the mouth of the trap there was no retreat, and although his reception gave him the deepest misgivings there was nothing else possible than to put on a good face and go to his father, in doing which he felt more than ever that he was under suspicion, as on entering the palace his friends were refused admission.

Josephus tells us that Quintilius Varus was at this time President of Syria, having succeeded Saturninus, and had come to Jerusalem on a visit to Herod, who had desired his advice in his present affairs. Before him the King brought his charges, and both the next day sat as judges, all the witnesses being called in and Antipater's guilt abundantly proved, the poison which had been sent by him having a fatal effect upon a criminal on whom, by Varus's orders, it was tried.

Antipater was taken back to prison, Herod preparing and sending letters and documents to Augustus to place before him this new trouble and request his instructions; and further discoveries, implicating one of the female attendants of the Empress Livia at Rome, having afterwards come to light, was compelled to despatch yet another embassy to explain them.

Just at the close of Herod's life, Augustus, having punished the criminal in his own household, granted permission for the execution of Antipater.

The life of Herod had been for years almost

unendurable ; it was impossible for him to pierce the dense cloud of misrepresentation raised around him, to discover the truth where all were equally plausible and equally false. Nor was it till the last, when proof was given of the double-dealing of his eldest son and of the inclusion of the name of his favoured younger brother in a scheme for removing him by poison, that at length he dimly saw the truth. He had found his brother, his wives, his sons—all of them participants in the advantages accruing from the position he had by skill and energy secured—habitually plotting for their own ends and whispering suspicions of all others, till towards the last he could trust no one save perhaps his sister, whose future interests were bound up in his.

We have now to speak of certain events that befell, according to Josephus, immediately before the close of the King's life, which have a direct bearing on the question of the credibility of Matthew's narrative, the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem, as alone recorded by him, being reserved till his story is reviewed. These are the destruction of the "Golden Eagle," and the King's alleged scheme of destroying at one blow the whole of the leaders of the nation.

But before doing so some notice must be taken of a tale of Josephus's, which has been constantly repeated and even perverted as tending to Herod's discredit, though without the slightest attempt at critical examination. It is as follows :—

Herod, having heard that John Hyrcanus had

about a century before opened David's tomb and abstracted therefrom 3000 talents of silver, resolves to do the like, and though he finds no money or bullion, is able to despoil it of gold furniture and precious goods, but seeking to penetrate further, where David and Solomon were interred, a flame drives back the soldiers employed, two being killed. Being alarmed at this prodigy, the King builds a stately stone monument at the mouth of the sepulchre, which last incident, Josephus drily adds, is alone recorded by Herod's confidant and historian, Nicolaus of Damascus.

That the tomb, just at the gates of Jerusalem, should at any time have contained vast treasure is more than improbable, for the following reasons:—

David had been for years accumulating money for the projected magnificent Temple to Jehovah, and it would have been sheer insanity in Solomon on his accession to the throne, actuated by the earnest purpose of carrying out this design of his father, to bury vast wealth which should never be exhumed, while it requires a very robust faith to credit that his son Rehoboam, who from the first was in difficulties, and in whose time Jerusalem and the Temple were thoroughly pillaged by Shishak of Egypt, should have respected such a useless buried hoard. Finally, that during the centuries of decay and disaster, of foreign subjection, of expatriation, and of national degradation, any treasure so easily to be taken (if it ever existed) should have remained unrifled is simply impossible.

No ancient sepulchre remains unviolated unless it is absolutely concealed, such as were a few in Egypt and Etruria, and the famous pit-graves at Mycenæ. Many other tombs in ancient times had the same reputation of holding vast treasures. The custom prevalent among various races of burying with the illustrious dead their personal belongings and ornaments, however valuable, for their use in the nether world (the burial of Alaric being a comparatively recent example), no doubt gave rise to these widespread legends. The contents of the Egyptian or Etruscan tombs, as well as those at Mycenæ, are all of this character, although in the instance last cited the five graves opened by Schliemann produced gold *personal* ornaments in such profusion that they were altogether little short of a hundredweight.

Josephus does not tell us whence the first part of this tale is derived, though it is not difficult to guess. The flames that drove back the sacrilegious intruders did duty at a much later date, when Julian dared to violate the sanctity of the Temple ruins.

We may now ask; how could any rational being flatter himself that the construction of a stately façade to the tomb he had violated and plundered could be any reparation for the iniquity?

The whole story is probably built upon the circumstance that Herod may from policy have restored and embellished the tomb at that time dilapidated, thus hoping to associate his name with

that of his illustrious predecessor and exemplar in Temple building.*

We now turn to the episode of the “golden eagle.”

Herod being old, and known to be suffering from incurable disease which might at any time cause his death, the population of Jerusalem, who we have seen were from the first bitterly opposed to his government and dynasty, were (says Josephus) daily becoming more restless, and finally broke out into open insurrection under the stimulus supplied adroitly by the incendiary preachings and teachings of two learned scribes whom they venerated.

Great stress was laid upon the offence against their law committed in the already mentioned erection of the golden eagle over the principal gate of the Temple, and the people were told that the time was arriving when the tyrant would be no more, and that great honour would accrue to those who dared to remove that hateful emblem.†

A false report of the King’s death hastened the

* As an instance of the unscrupulous development of a disparaging legend, see in Blair’s “Chronological Tables” (Bohn, 1856) the following, under B.C. 9:—“Herod plunders the treasures in the vaults of the Temple” (!)

† Some years before, on the occasion of the erection of the theatre at Jerusalem, the decorations on the pillars, which in the Roman fashion were trophies of armour, were denounced as violations of the law, for that there were human figures behind them. Herod thereupon took the trouble to undeceive the complainants by having one of the trophies taken down in their presence, revealing the plain wooden posts on which they were grouped. However, as Josephus then immediately speaks of a conspiracy to assassinate him in the same building, it may be presumed that the King did not in this manner succeed in quieting the tender consciences of his Judæan subjects.

action of some of the most fiery spirits, who pulled the eagle down, cutting it to pieces with axes. However, the guard secured more than forty of the rioters, with the two scribes, the instigators of the outrage. On being brought before the sick King, he charged them with sacrilege in destroying what he had dedicated to God, out of their hatred to him, and in spite of the benefits he had lavished on the nation.

The actual perpetrators and abettors were tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be burnt alive, many not so deeply implicated being on the petition of the people ultimately pardoned.*

This Golden Eagle placed over the principal gate of the Temple, was thus in that portion of the buildings open to all without regard to nationality or religion, and was, of course, a symbol and recognition of the over-lordship of Augustus, which it was prudent and possibly requisite for Herod to place there. We find no evidence that it was objected to on the occasion of a visit of Agrippa, but as the sacerdotal authorities were desirous of conciliating the mighty Minister from whom favours for themselves and their countrymen abroad might be obtained, they were fulsome in their adulation and postponed the expression of their conscientious scruples to a more convenient season. Since that time for ten years the Imperial eagle had remained;

* The burning of the destroyers of the eagle took place on March 12th, B.C. 4, a date fixed by an eclipse of the moon (Ant. xvii., 6, 4), and Herod died *before* the passover, April 12th, in the same year.

the people must daily have passed under it ; the practical protest being reserved for a time when, as the King was dying, it could be with less risk indulged in.*

Josephus now tells us an extraordinary tale ; how, at the extreme end of the King's life, when death might be expected day by day, he summoned a large number of the principal men, "the most illustrious" of the country, and on their presenting themselves, shut them all up in the hippodrome at Jericho, in which city he was lying, and gave his sister Salome and her husband Alexis, who were in attendance on him, the strictest secret injunctions that "by the faith they owed to God" (!) they should at the moment of his death, and before its announcement, surround the hippodrome with soldiers, who should be directed to slaughter all inside with their darts ; thus he said he would secure a real mourning at his funeral.† It is added that immediately on the King's decease all those detained were dismissed to their homes.

The following considerations seem to throw the

* The hypercritical extension of the second commandment as a prohibition of the making the image of any living thing without reference to its being intended as an object of worship, was the work of the later rabbis and the fanatical Pharisees. In the time of Solomon this extreme punctilio did not exist : we read of the vast vessel the "molten sea" reared on the backs of twelve brazen oxen, also of the cherubims of the sanctuary and the laver-bases with "lions and oxen" ; and it will be noted that these objects were in the inner temple, not merely on the exterior gate.

† That these instructions are supposed to be secret is moreover shown by the circumstance that the troops are not at once to surround the hippodrome—that is to be done when he is no more !

gravest doubt as to the historical truth of this startling incident:—

When at length the treachery of Antipater had been thoroughly brought to light, the King, as already told, sent envoys and letters to Rome appealing to Augustus that he might be punished, and during their absence was much pre-occupied with the question of the succession, for as Antipater had been his destined heir, he had to resettle it.

At first, on suspicion that Archelaus and Philip were implicated in these intrigues, he had decided to bequeath the whole of his kingdom to his son Antipas, but this disposition he again altered on further investigation, dividing it between Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip, with the express direction that the sanction of Augustus should first be solicited and obtained.

But of what avail would be this solicitude for the future of his dynasty if *at the same time* he was meditating an act of the blindest fury, so atrocious that it would render any respect for his wishes on the part of Augustus absolutely impossible, and assure the success of the national party which had never ceased to demand the abolition of the monarchy and the restoration of the ancient theocratic government directly under Rome?

Again, the despatch of letters throughout the kingdom and the gathering of all the notables would be a work of time; two months at the very lowest estimate would allow a date at which such a general assembly could be got together. Thus, the alleged

murderous design could not have been a sudden or passing homicidal impulse, but must have been deliberately held to for a long time: besides, the King *must* have carefully planned that the gathering of this multitude at Jericho should take place only a few days before his own death, the approximate date of which he must have accurately foreknown; as the idea that he could expect to keep all the principal men of the kingdom locked up in a hippodrome for weeks together, that they might be ready for massacre when his own decease might chance to take place, is too ridiculous to argue upon.

The last illness and death of the King (B.C. 4) (the account being furnished by his enemies) is represented as loathsome and agonising—it may have been so—but it was the custom of the Jews to show that all whom they hated had died miserably or in horrible torments,* this fashion being afterwards taken up by the Christians, the very contradictory but equally horrible and repulsive details which *tradition* gives of the end of the traitor Judas being an illustration.

To follow Josephus's narrative. Immediately on the King's death the prisoners as beforesaid are released by Salome and her husband, who then call together the soldiers, to whom they announce the death and read the will, Archelaus being saluted as King with acclamation.

The magnificent and lengthy obsequies of Herod

* See the death of Antiochus (II. Maccabees, ix., 5-12.)

then take place without a hitch, and the stately procession daily towards his tomb at Herodium, Archelaus continuing his legal term of mourning till the seventh day, after which the populace are feasted, and he addresses them, thanking them for the zeal they had shown about his father's funeral, being received with every sign of goodwill.

Not a word of the notables who had just been shut up *for more than a week** in the hippodrome of their town without any reason given, and who had just escaped by the merest chance a bloody death. All is peace, all is forgotten by the people—or at least by Josephus.

What really took place was in all probability the following:—That the King towards the last, being anxious from prudential motives to obtain, as David had done before him, the ratification by the leaders of the people of the distribution he had made of his realm, which approval would certainly have great weight at Rome, gave orders that the principal notables should be called together; that many came, but that the King, being then at the last extremity, could not receive them, and that after their detention several days on the chance of his improvement, his death caused his sister and her husband to dismiss them to their homes.†

* Joseph., Ant. xviii., 7, 1, and 8, 1.

† Salome, an important legatee under the last will, made just before, would not be likely to spread about the statement that her brother was insane at the time of its execution, and no other informant of a secret compact can be suggested.

After the funeral ceremonies were completed, Archelaus, Antipas, and Salome—important beneficiaries under the will—hastened to Rome, accompanied by their principal advisers, to place their claims before Augustus, and obtain his ratification to their bequests, though Archelaus was somewhat delayed by another outbreak in Jerusalem, as usual fomented by the sacerdotal party. A demand—with which Archelaus could not comply—for the punishment of those who had been concerned with the sentencing to death the destroyers of the golden eagle, urged with clamour at a time when Jerusalem was crowded, culminated in the inevitable riot; a collision with the troops, though Archelaus did his utmost to prevent it, was brought about, and in the result a certain number of the populace were slain in the Temple precincts.

Josephus tells us, with his usual disregard for figures, that the dead numbered 3000, but, however small the number, it was an unfortunate opening of the rule of Archelaus, and was fully taken advantage of by the Jerusalem leaders, who forthwith on their part despatched envoys to Rome to protest against the cruelty with which they were treated, and to ask as usual for the restoration of the old theocracy.

Thus at length in Rome all parties interested in the will were brought together, for Philip was also induced personally to present his claim; Augustus, patiently hearing all sides, including the Jewish deputation, and in the result practically upholding the old King's testament without alteration.

Archelaus was to have Judæa and Samaria; Antipas, Galilee and Peræa; and Philip, the north country; Salome's towns and other places which her brother had left her were also secured to her, the title of King which Herod had desired for his eldest son being alone withheld for the time pending proof of good behaviour.

Such was the distribution of Palestine for ten years after the death of Herod, till the deposition and exile of Archelaus (A.D. 6) brought Judæa and Samaria under the direct rule of Rome as a part of the province of Syria, as will be seen when Luke's narrative is considered.

As to Herod's character, if we may trust Josephus, he was a devoted son, a firm friend of his elder brother, deeply lamenting his loss, and throughout his life showed a strong affection for his surviving younger brother Pheroras,* though it does not seem to have been reciprocated. His sister Salome, in spite of her irritating vagaries, was well treated by him from first to last, and was generously remembered in his will. His liberality towards beneficial public works was remarkable even in the progressive Augustan period.

* “He (Herod) begged of Cæsar a tetrarchy for his brother Pheroras, besides himself granting him a revenue of 100 talents out of his own kingdom, that, in case he came to any harm himself, his brother might be in safety, and that his (Herod's) sons might not have dominion over him” (Joseph., Ant. xv., 10, 3).

Ant. xv., 7, 3, speaking of Pheroras, “He had bestowed many favours upon him, and had advanced him to that height of power that he was almost a partner with him in the kingdom.”

Herod was indisputably a skilful and daring soldier; that he was a genial man originally is probable, for he was accepted as a friend and comrade by the frivolous Antony; that in politics he had the keen insight of the statesman is certain, as, otherwise, he could not have retained the confidence of the sagacious Augustus to the close of his life.

The warring interests in his complex households, the arrogance of Mariamne and her mother, who, presuming on their Asmonæan descent, affronted and insulted the other wives less nobly born, as well as Salome; also their correspondence with Cleopatra, while he was in dire straits owing to her interested enmity; and, later, the never-ending struggle for the succession between the numerous rival claimants, supported by the basest arts for the purpose of undoing competitors; the perjury and perfidy of all, without exception, rendered peace impossible to the occupier of the throne, and must, in the end, have acted prejudicially upon his character.

Herod was not a Trajan nor a Marcus Aurelius, but neither was he a Nero or Domitian; the severities which are laid to his charge in the punishment of conspiracy to assassinate were but the usual proceedings of the time (see p. 88 f); it is only in *his* case that they are dwelt upon.

Nowhere do we find in authentic history that he murdered for murder's sake; there was often, in those days, but the alternative of "kill or be killed,"

and he chose the former—his father had died by poison, his elder brother by treachery, the zealots of Judæa had sworn to kill him, while towards the close of his life, apart from the incessant but more vague palace plots, he had a narrow escape from poison.

Can we wonder that Herod, the man of Edom, the probable free-thinker, who could actually marry a Samaritan woman, and, reigning over a vast Gentile population who gave him no trouble and whose interests he was bound to consider, was as ready to build a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus as to Jehovah, greatly shared the dislike felt by Rome to the sombre Judaism of the south, especially as it was untiring in its efforts to thwart him in his plans, spread lying tales, sow discord in his family, and promote revolution?

Yet in spite of his natural aversion, the King tried again and again to effect a reconciliation with the priestly and rabbinical party, whose hold over the ignorant and fanatical populace he had cause to fear, but their leaders, in spite of all concessions, held coldly aloof: in vain did he try by a concocted pedigree to prove that he came of Jewish stock; he was hated as the nominee of Rome—the alien usurper of the throne of the Maccabees.

CHAPTER IV.

MATTHEW'S NARRATIVE (VISIT OF THE MAGI).

THE MAGI—THE STAR—CONDUCT OF THE MAGI, OF HEROD AND HIS ADVISERS, OF THE SANHEDRIM AND THE POPULACE—EXTERIOR EVIDENCE FOR THE STORY.

IN the text of Matthew the division between the purely family history and the story of the public events in Judæa takes place at the commencement of the second chapter with the arrival of the Magi. We will now attempt to define who and what are these individuals.

Tacitus (Ann. ii., 27-33), in recording the first serious development, in the case of Libo, A.D. 16, of the practice of secret magical arts by aliens in Rome, which “for so many years afterwards preyed upon the commonwealth,” speaks of the predictions of the Chaldaeans, of the mysteries of the magi and interpreters of dreams, of necromancy, and of occult symbols which, affixed to the image or written name of the individual, would be potent as malific spells.

On this occasion the Senate issued decrees of expulsion from Italy of all astrologers and magicians; and it may be noted that not a doubt is suggested of the efficacy of their illegal formulæ.

Three years later (Ann. ii., 85), after an over-

whelming scandal,* measures were taken to suppress the secret rites of the Jews and Egyptians—4000 fit for military service being deported to Sardinia to help to break down the brigandage always rife in the island, the historian remarking spitefully that if the malaria of that coast should destroy them the loss to the State would be trivial†—the rest were forthwith to leave Italy unless they abjured their superstitions.

Suetonius (Tib. xxxvi.) narrates the same incident, and adds, “He also expelled the astrologers; but upon their suing for pardon, and promising to renounce their profession, he revoked his decree.”

At later dates those dangerous Asiatic charlatans, the self-styled “mathematici,” along with the Hebrew fortune-tellers and Egyptian impostors who infested the transtiburine suburb of Rome, were rigorously prosecuted and expelled, but only to creep back again to ply their nefarious but profitable trades and influence empty-headed patrician youths and wealthy matrons of easy morals.

Of such repute and in such surroundings were “Magi” in the ordinary acceptation of the term at that date when in Rome or the great cities,† presenting no analogy whatever with the mysterious sages of Matthew’s story, whom the Christian legend in its later fantastic development has raised to the rank of kings. *They* are absolutely abnormal in type, for,

* See Josephus (Ant. xviii., 3, 4) for a detailed account.

† “Si interessent, vile damnum.”

‡ In the reign of Claudius, Lollia was accused of dealing with *the Magi and Chaldaeans*.—(Tac., Ann. xii., 22.)

honourable in character, disinterested to the last degree, they undertake a toilsome journey from their native country—it should be Babylonia or Media*—expressly to worship one whom they deem the legitimate though unrecognised king of a far-off realm, and, unconscious of danger or indifferent to it, accept a commission from the monarch *de facto* to search him out, and, having effected this, bestow costly gifts with no hope of recompense, in marked contradiction with ordinary eastern procedure.

Yet it must not be overlooked that like the rest of the *μάγοι* they depend upon astrology, obtaining warnings of coming events from the aspects of the heavenly bodies, and that if the advent of a special star enabled these adepts to assure themselves that a "King of the Jews" was to be born, a remarkable development of what is now definitely classed as a pseudo-science, based either upon self-deception or on fraud, must have taken place in their unnamed country, and that accurate results from its faulty teachings had been granted by divine interposition to special individuals, quite unconnected with the occurrences portended, while the whole of the nation primarily and deeply interested remained in the most complete ignorance.

THE STAR.

It is impossible to tell from the text of Matthew to what class this star apparition may belong;

* Justin Martyr, writing a century and a half after the event, says they came from Arabia, but gives no authority for his view.

whether it is a planetary body, a fixed star, a comet, or a meteor; for the word *ἀστρίς* may mean any of these.

A “blazing star” (comet) appeared in Nero’s time, A.D. 60, and was supposed to foretell destruction to kings and princes (Suet., Nero xxxvi.); Tacitus (Ann. xiv., 22) says that it portended change to kingdoms; this would be a comparatively recent and *universally observed* occurrence when the account in Matthew was written.*

In Jewish tradition their Messiah and a star, “Star of Jacob,” were closely connected; the last pretender of all was “Son of the Star.”

Kepler’s hap-hazard guess in his accustomed manner that because there was a conjunction of planets in 1605 with the new or variable star in Ophiuchus appearing about the same time, therefore a previous planetary conjunction a little before the nativity would equally be accompanied by the advent of such a star (being the “Star of Bethlehem”), is a remarkable instance of the *post hoc—propter hoc* fallacy; even in his own lifetime he must have found that a new star may appear without a planetary conjunction, as did the far more brilliant one in Cassiopeia of 1572.

To the serious student of to-day to recognise any connection between phenomena so absolutely

* As to the general belief in the influence of comets on mundane events and their portents see Pliny, (N. H., 23), who elaborately classifies them and explains the significance of each variety in human affairs.

dissociated as the fortuitous position in their regular orbits of small planets of our system bringing them into the same line of sight to us, and the stupendous chemical action going on in self-lighted bodies so far away in space as to be to our imperfect faculties at practically infinite distance is indeed inadmissible.

Yet Kepler is still quoted in support of Matthew when, even if we admit him as a witness, he can tell us nothing pertinent to the matter* : the question simply being—how could such an appearance signify, and correctly, to certain persons in the east, and to no others, that a King of the Jews should be born ?

We find the Magi, on their arrival at Jerusalem, in nowise assisted by the star in their search, asking publicly “Where is he that is born King of the Jews ?” But it again appears, changing, however, its apparent character from a fixed star, having virtually no proper motion, and becomes a strangely erratic atmospheric meteor, for, on their visiting Bethlehem, it goes before them, resting at last over the house which shelters the babe they seek ; which further guidance has been deferred till every difficulty has been developed, and the prophesied and *therefore predestined* massacre of innocent babes has been brought about.

* Those who lean on Kepler (or at least quote him) shut their eyes to the absurdity of identifying a miraculous meteor which indicates a dwelling-house in a Judæan village with one of the vast orbs of interstellar space—they cannot have it both ways, as a miraculous appearance and as a natural object as well.

CONDUCT OF THE MAGI.

It is a singular circumstance that the Magi should undertake a difficult or at least a toilsome journey for what, according to the narrative, is an absolutely trivial motive. Had they sought out one whose impressive teaching had spread far and wide, to whom men of thought and earnestness were flocking as before to Buddha, or later to the Baptist, their action would be comprehensible, but here their only acknowledged object is to stand at the cradle of one new-born and offer gifts.

It may be plainly said, that no sane persons would go to the capital of *any* King known or unknown, openly avowing that they were seeking out a rightful claimant to his crown, and with the expressed intention of tendering homage to him when he should be found, and it is not easy to conceive the possibility of these strangers being entirely ignorant of the character of Herod after he had occupied the throne for more than thirty years, during which time his influence had been frequently invoked on behalf of the diaspori of the east, who had fought in Armenia, and who, in constant communication with great international traders such as the Syrian Saramalla, would be almost as well known on the Euphrates or the Tigris as at Damascus or Antioch. Moreover, Babylonia had in its towns important Hebrew communities constantly in touch with Jerusalem; Herod's first High-priest being a Babylonian, as

was Hillel the famous rabbi of Jerusalem, while even in the north of Mesopotamia and in Armenia, the Jews abounded.

These mysterious strangers having deliberately drawn the vindictive attention of a powerful and jealous ruler on the inhabitants of a peaceful district close to his capital, bringing upon them a fearful disaster, disappear at once and for ever.

It is in the highest degree improbable that these strangers to the country could withdraw themselves from such a *cul-de-sac* as Judæa unless the impatient King purposely gave them a start of very many days, for all the lines of travel east and west of the Dead Sea were commanded by his fortresses ; moreover, his emissaries were everywhere, as Josephus tells us.

As for the Mediterranean coast, these strangers would not find it easy to elude the King in that direction, as he had control of all the ports at that date.

CONDUCT OF HEROD AND HIS ADVISERS.

It is remarkable that Herod, considering the extremely strained relations that existed between them, should convene the chief priests and scribes to obtain details respecting the coming of a Messiah who should supplant his dynasty, thus showing the importance he himself attached to the rumour. He would know that even the Maccabees in their time had been accepted but as a stop-gap till the "faithful prophet" should arise.

The old King was not alone. All his family,

bitter as might be their feuds, were still more than himself interested in the succession. Archelaus, Antipas, and even the gentler Philip would make common cause to track out such a new pretension ; besides, the King had at his disposal men of the world, competent to represent him at the Court of Augustus, and other skilled and experienced adherents of the dynasty.

The King could have had no possible motive for dissimulation when giving audience to the Magi ; it would have been at once evident that no knowledge could be obtained from them as to where the child should be born which might have supplied an inducement to temporise.

And then, why should he ask “diligently” as to the date of the star’s appearance ? If it was to know up to what age to command the massacre, how, as we are told he expected the return of the Magi with full particulars, could that wholesale atrocity have been in his mind ? Yet it is quite impossible to suggest any other motive for the persistent question, though easy to see how a writer at a later time, knowing very little of the real history of the epoch, might put it in Herod’s mouth in view of the impressive climax to the tale he was preparing.

Neither Herod nor his counsellors could have thought in sober fact that to send to Bethlehem, wholly unaccompanied, men who, though charged with such an important inquiry, would have at all events but an imperfect knowledge of the language and usages of the country, could be an expedient

course. The Magi were at fault when they arrived at Jerusalem ; the star had ceased to guide them, leaving them absolutely dependent upon ordinary sources of information in the matter of the tracing of the child. It is the chief priests and elders who point out Bethlehem as the place to search, not the Magi. How then could Herod and his advisers, when they despatched these foreigners from Jerusalem, satisfy themselves that they would be able to distinguish the Messiah from any other infants of the district ? No one could, *then*, possibly foresee that the wonderful star would reappear, altering its character, and guide these sages to the very house of the child sought.

The natural, almost inevitable, course would have been to have sent some one along with the Magi to Bethlehem, not only to assist them by his knowledge of the district and the people, but also, as Herod and those who favoured his dynasty would have a sinister interest in the search, to make sure that the babe when found should not be removed, as he would surely be if the parents suspected the purpose of the King in prosecuting these inquiries.*

Even on the supposition that Herod and all about him unaccountably overlooked this obvious arrangement, there was nothing to prevent a messenger, or indeed any number of messengers, being sent any day afterwards to Bethlehem, *only five miles away*, in which case the family visited in such a small place by

* It must be remembered that the parents are well aware of the divine dignity of the child.

the opulent strangers would be traced without the slightest difficulty, and if they had already hurriedly left the village this fact would be ascertained at once and an atrocious massacre of the children left behind would have no meaning whatever.

CONDUCT OF THE SANHEDRIM AND THE POPULACE.

It is indisputable that no information as to the epoch at which the national Messiah, or anointed leader, should arrive could be extracted from the Hebrew sacred books ; his advent was hoped for in all emergencies, the expectation never ceasing till the last Messiah, about 130 A.D., in his fall finally broke down the Palestinian nationality of the race.

Nor could it be told in what guise he would come ; whether as a conqueror who should place Israel at the head of the nations, as a reformer who should bring back the golden age, or, as suggested in some of the scattered predictions found in the second Isaiah and other prophetic writings, he would be the "Servant of Jehovah"—meek, lowly, and a sufferer for the sins of others.

It is not possible that the arrogant dignitaries of the Sanhedrim should at once believe on the word of strangers, necessarily without a scrap of corroborative evidence, that Jehovah had so far ignored or forgotten them that the announcement of an event of such momentous interest to their

people had been granted exclusively to a small group of aliens in a distant land.*

On the contrary, they would have hastened to denounce the asserted new revelation as an impudent imposture.

As for the people, we are told "the King was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." This is quite impossible at that date, if the phrase is used in the same sense as applicable to the King.

There would be, if they believed such a story as the Magi's, more or less of excitement, but the mass of the populace of the capital would rather welcome any political difficulty which arose, in their then state of unrest and antagonism to the dynasty, and would not be "troubled" in the least at the prospect of a rival claimant to the throne.

In conclusion, there is no apparently adequate motive for the thrice-repeated interposition of the Almighty in favouring this singular and seemingly useless enterprise—first, by the granting of the star sign which brought the Magi to Jerusalem; second, by the miraculous star indication of the home of Jesus; third, by the dream intimation that they should flee from Herod's dominions.

It may also be asked, who could possibly have informed Matthew of the dream which warned the wise men of the danger from Herod? *They* would not have discussed the subject in the village before

* It is useless to contend that Herod did not disclose to the Sanhedrim the reason for his question; a matter that stirred all Jerusalem could not be hidden from them.

taking flight if in possession of their senses ; and they certainly did not tell Joseph and Mary, who in that case would have at once fled without waiting for or needing the subsequent special revelation to themselves.

EXTERIOR EVIDENCE FOR THE STORY.

A prophecy alluded to by Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, as being spread over the East, viz., that a ruler coming from Judæa should rule the world, has been claimed as supporting the story of the Magi ; but this historic unrest and expectancy must be placed more than two generations later, when it was a result of the apparent break-up of the Roman power, consequent on the internal troubles of the Empire and the civil wars which made and unmade Emperors after the death of Nero, and previous to the reconsolidation of the State by the Flavian family. Not a trace of such expectation can be found at the date of the nativity ; all the world was then at peace, and no shadow of political change in the East was visible.

The passages brought forward are as follows :—

Suetonius (Vesp. iv.), who writes of the time of Vespasian at a date only a few years later, says : “ Throughout the whole of the East an ancient and firm belief is universally accepted that *at this time*, according to the decree of fate, some who should go forth from Judæa should become masters of the world.”

Of course, it was spread over the East ! The

Jews were everywhere and carried their beliefs and superstitions with them. It must be noted also that Suetonius uses the plural "*profecti*," showing that he does not understand that any single person is indicated.

This passage is illustrated and defined by the narrative of Tacitus, who (Hist. v., 13), speaking of the *Jews* at the epoch of the war which ended by the destruction of Jerusalem, says: "The majority were of the persuasion that in the ancient meetings of the priests it was stated that *at that very time* the East should flourish, and that they who came forth from Judæa should be rulers of the world."

Both historians consider that these prophecies were fulfilled by the elevation of Vespasian and Titus to the Imperial dignity while resident in Palestine, an interpretation of vague Hebrew prophecies suggested by Josephus during his captivity in his abject desire to ingratiate himself with the Flavian family; and although the sturdy common sense of the new Imperator might suspect the prediction, he could not fail to see its use as a political engine of control among a credulous people.*

Upon this point we have the evidence of Josephus himself (Bell. vi., 5, 4): "But what chiefly incited them (the Jewish people) was an ambiguous prophecy,

* Tacitus drily says (Hist. i., 10):—"That the sovereign power was marked out by the secret counsels of Heaven and by portents and responses for Vespasian and his two sons we began to believe *after* his accession."

Suetonius, on his part, is hopelessly superstitious.

found in their ancient writings, that about this period some one from their country should obtain the empire of the world. This they received as applied to themselves, and many, eminent for wisdom, were deceived in the interpretation of it. The oracle, however, in reality indicated the elevation of Vespasian, he having been proclaimed Emperor in Judæa."

This passage—in a book published in Rome not later than A.D. 80—is the probable source of the comments both of Suetonius and Tacitus. It was obviously the interest of the Flavian family that the prophecy should be widely known; besides, Suetonius bears this out when he says (Suet., Vesp. v.): "Josephus, one of the noble prisoners who was put in chains, confidently affirmed that he should be released in a short time by Vespasian, who, however, would first be Emperor."

It will be seen that all these quotations have reference to the time of Vespasian; and it may be plainly said that the purposely obscure though often quoted allusion by Virgil in an eclogue, written *about* B.C. 40, to "the child who, with his father's virtues, should rule the world in peace," is intended to apply to a Roman, not a Hebrew, and has no possible connection with those *eastern* rumours put about more than 100 years afterwards by a supple Jew in peril of his life.

CHAPTER V.

MATTHEW'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED (MASACRE AT BETHLEHEM AND ITS SEQUEL).

WHEN COULD THE MASSACRE HAVE TAKEN PLACE?—DOES HEROD'S CHARACTER RENDER ITS PERPETRATION PROBABLE?—THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT.

IN merely reading the sketch of Herod's life in this book and observing the crowded incidents of its last five years, or better still, in critically studying the fully detailed narratives covering the same short period in Josephus, it will be plainly seen that it is a difficult task to find a defensible position anywhere for the foul deed at Bethlehem.

It could hardly be during the time of his disgrace, while his enemies were, as we learn, occupied with watchful care in seeking how they could still further embroil him with the Imperator, and deprive him of his crown and perhaps his life, while, too, he was afraid even to protect his frontier subjects owing to dread of denunciation, or afterwards, when his ambassador Nicolaus had at length, in spite of the opposition of his foes, appeased the angry Augustus, and he had just been restored to favour, that Herod would incur the risk of commanding such an atrocity,

braving the inevitable wrath of his master as well as certain reprisals or perchance civil war.

The trial at Berytus of the two sons of Mariamne, with the Syrian Governor and other foreign dignitaries acting as assessors, then took place. Herod could scarcely at that time be ordering a diabolical and useless deed, the rumour of which would outrage any sense of manhood apart from nationality among his visitors.

A little later the King is historically known to be entertaining and consulting Quintilius Varus, the new Syrian pro-prætor, as an Imperial guest in Jerusalem; we cannot suppose that he had just before been engaged in literally extirpating without regard to social position the young children of his subjects close by.

Augustus on hearing of such a thing at any of these times would assuredly and most justifiably have believed him mad and at once have superseded him.

In those days the advent of a child alleged to be a Jewish Messiah was of little moment to the King or his supporters. Herod could not possibly have attached political importance to such a babe, for he could not foresee the legends that would spring up much later round its cradle; he knew well that no populace would wait for a King and leader during the long years of infancy and childhood.

If certain Jews had dreams of national re-habilitation or dominion he would not share them; his pre-occupations at that period were far more serious

than the pondering over tales of stars that foretold a national King, and listening eagerly to foreigners who came to instruct his people as to their own affairs.

He had repeatedly visited Rome, he had been the confidant of Antony and afterwards of Agrippa, he had fought in company with the legions both in Palestine and Armenia, and was well aware of the enormous reserve of strength of that power and its apparently inexhaustible good-fortune—in fine, of the utter futility of any contest with it.

With these views all his *historical* acts accord. He was only too well aware that the real and imminent peril to his dynasty lay in the dissensions of his family and the risk of calumny to the Imperator.

If we place the occurrence later still, during the absence of his embassy to Augustus in the matter of Antipater's conspiracy, how could Herod or his ambassadors hope for a favourable reception of their plaint had this futile infamy just been carried out? Yet we find in the sequel that his prayer after investigation was fully granted!

During the sojourn of the envoys at Rome the final complete breakdown of the health of the King occurred, with the consequent riot and destruction of the golden eagle.

This it was that "troubled" all Jerusalem at that date; as for the King, when we reflect on his uncertainty respecting the result of this last appeal to his overlord, and the resulting doubt in his mind

as to the most prudent arrangement of the succession, which we learn from Josephus much occupied him; and now again with this outbreak of the Jerusalem populace on the rumour of his death—he, on his part, had quite other things to “trouble” him.

When the embassy returned with the permission to punish Antipater, it was from his deathbed, when almost *in extremis*, that the King gave the order for his execution, afterwards lingering in agony five days. Thus at that period there was no time for convening any council and subsequently pursuing the tortuous policy of deceit and delay told of by Matthew.

From the above considerations the finding of a position in real history for this massacre is not an easy one.

Would Herod be likely, from habitual reckless ferocity, to plan and execute such a massacre?

It is obvious that, if we fail to find a time at which Herod, having regard to his recorded acts and the incidents surrounding him, *could* perform this massacre, a psychological analysis of his alleged “impulses” towards the perpetration of such damaging and palpably useless crimes is not of great importance. Still something must be said on the subject, for these impulses, in default of better reasons, are constantly brought forward as supporting the historical character of the occurrence.

The reputation of Herod, after having been during his life at the mercy of his implacable sacerdotal enemies, was for long after his death a

target for the erratic but envenomed shafts of the rabbinical writers. The same ill-will was cherished at a still later date by those who directed the new religion, who necessarily gauged his character by the massacre they doubted not he had perpetrated, till finally the real historic Herod, the crafty diplomat and able soldier, the staunch friend and deadly enemy, whose misdeeds would otherwise have been of as little interest as those of other kings, has been in the popular mind merged in the monstrous bugbear that has been set up in his place.

His reputation has also suffered from a characteristic which his sole biographer, Josephus, has, in common with many of the ancient historians, of telling of the secret doings of individuals, and even of their motives, with the same tone of certainty as that with which their public acts are recorded—dreams, private interviews, secret plots, being all laid bare with a definite accuracy which at times appals the modern student accustomed to the restraints of critical doubt.

We also find a rough impartiality where the unassimilated statements of spiteful rabbis and courtly panegyrists jostle each other, the result being that the colours are crude and jarring; they have not the softened tints of nature and truth, though all the time the general good faith of the author may not be impugned.*

The many passages of praise are not here dwelt

* The effect sometimes is as if the "History" of Procopius and his "Secret History" were blended.

upon, as the accusations of revolting and insensate cruelty almost universally credited at the present day have to be met, and to do this we must again glance at that portion of Herod's history which deals with the leading illegalities and crimes charged against the King.

The execution of Mariamne, at a later period of her two sons, and of Antipater, all followed on trial and judicial sentence.

That plots existed cannot be doubted by the careful student of history, and though one may have little faith (very possibly) in the tribunal, even when in the later cases it was strengthened by Roman assessors, we have no materials before us by which to retry these causes, and revise or reverse judgment.

The leading iniquities charged against the King are :—

- 1st. The proscription following the conquest of Judæa.
- 2nd. The drowning of the boy Aristobulus.
- 3rd. The burning alive of the destroyers of the golden eagle.
- 4th. The *intended* massacre of all Jewish notables at his death.

In the first, which may be rapidly dismissed as it has been already dealt with (see note, p. 35), Herod merely carried out the universal practice that had been in existence since the days of Sulla, and in *his* case was compelled to do it for the benefit of others.

The second has been already shown to be most

improbable (see note, p. 42), whichever of the two discordant tales given by Josephus (in "Wars" and "Antiquities") may be adopted; it was put abroad to serve the interests of Cleopatra, the King's deadly enemy, and would, even at or near the time, be most difficult of proof.

The third—the severity of the punishment of the destroyers of the golden eagle—demands closer scrutiny, as it, along with the alleged intention of the King to destroy the whole of the notables of the nation at one blow, has furnished a standing argument for the probability of the Bethlehem massacre.

The Roman code at the time and for long afterwards was, especially for the low-born and slave, of atrocious severity, and it is too much to expect that the subject provinces and kingdoms would be on a higher level of jurisprudence than their masters. Torture was habitually resorted to to elicit evidence, and ferocious punishments, of which crucifixion is a type, were of daily occurrence. In the correspondence between Pliny the younger and his master Trajan, concerning the Christians in Bithynia, we find in the letter of a liberal-minded man to the best of Emperors the following passage:—

"These examinations made me think it necessary to inquire by torture what was the truth, which I did of two servant-maids called deaconesses; but still I discovered no more than that they were addicted to a bad and extravagant superstition."

Jonathan, the head of the sedition in Cyrene, is,

on being taken, first tormented and then burned alive by Titus, who has somewhat of a reputation for humanity (Josephus, "Wars" vii., 11, 3); and hundreds of bodies, rotting on crosses, could be seen in Palestine during the war which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the event of the assassination of a Roman master by a slave, the code condemned to death the whole slave household however numerous, and this law was actually enforced.*

It was a brutal time altogether, and justly shocks us; yet, even in our own case, looking back little more than 300 years, men were burned alive also, for the expression of opinion clashing with that of the ruling ecclesiastical party upon some abstruse dogma; while the infliction of the same horrible doom on poor old women was complacently justified by the Biblical quotation, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

In Herod's time it was impossible that the promoters of revolution, sacrilege being thrown in as a telling make-weight, could remain unpunished; besides, the deliberate insult to Rome in the wanton destruction of its emblem would have to be atoned for. Even in our own days great results may follow so simple a matter as the trampling on a flag.

* About thirty years after the death of Jesus, it happened that Pedanius Secundus, Prefect of Rome, was murdered by one of his slaves, on which occasion the entire household—numbering more than 300—were slaughtered, as Emperor and Senate decided that the law must take its course.

The fourth incident, which has been already fully discussed (p. 60), is so extremely improbable that Josephus was most likely imposed upon by a sensational story, and it must not be forgotten that his history was written in Rome quite eighty years after the events he describes as happening in the remote province of Palestine, and that he certainly held no brief for Herod, for he praises his successor and relative, Herod Agrippa, at his expense.

At the time of writing, Jerusalem was a heap of ruins, from which Jews were warned off by a Roman legion, but useful myths were incubating, while the ordinary legend was sure to be busy.

Finally, in all these cases of alleged severity or cruelty, the action of Herod was, even if historical, vengeance on enemies; there is no precedent in his known history which gives probability to the extermination of the infant children of his own subjects in a neighbouring district, and in a time of profound peace, and the special acrimony which has pursued his memory, seeing in them a proof that he was a monster to whom such a deed would be congenial, has been fostered by the necessity of building up a much-needed buttress for Matthew's story.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE MASSACRE.

We now at last have to see what support Matthew's story has from the outside.

Josephus, who in both his works enters into minute detail of the occurrences in Judæa towards

the close of Herod's life, has not a word of this tragedy, which to him, a strict Jew, would have been of deepest interest.

Had he ever heard of it, it is simply incredible that he could have forgotten it; and when and where he wrote he had no possible reason to omit the incident.

He records, as we know, that the people of the capital were agitated and rebellious during the King's last illness over the affair of the golden eagle, and yet an incomparably greater outrage on their nation, and, worse still, on their family life, had, if Matthew is to be credited, been recently perpetrated just outside the gates.

Moreover, in the pleading before Augustus on behalf of the brothers Archelaus and Antipas, after the death of Herod (the hostile Jewish deputation looking on), the advocate for the validity of the first will, which made Antipas successor to the whole kingdom, is represented by Josephus as in his argument urging that the old King had deliberately, by that instrument, deprived Archelaus of the succession, "for the prevision his father had of his *barbarity* made him never give him any hope of possessing the kingdom."

Now, of course, such rhetorical speeches are simply fabrications by the historian, but this instance nevertheless shows that he knew nothing of a horrible series of unprovoked murders perpetrated only a short time before the attributed speech was delivered, as if he had been aware of them he could not have put

such a preposterous argument into the mouth of any advocate.*

The rabbinical writers, venomous as they are in seeking to damage the character of the Idumean, make not the slightest reference to this massacre, though it would have furnished them with a telling text.

It also strangely happens that neither in the whole of the four Gospels, including the parallel account of the birth in Luke, nor in the Pauline Epistles, nor in fact in any of the canonical books, is there the most remote or indirect reference to this most noteworthy slaughter of the innocents. Finally, in the whole body of extant church literature, from the Roman Clement to Eusebius of Cæsarea, we do not find the faintest reflex of the incident.

It is nevertheless true that the massacre (or rather the design of it, for the context forbids belief in its perpetration) finds a place in the apocryphal work called the "Protevangelion of James," but this production is such a crude compound of unintelligent copying and childish fable as to be beneath serious criticism, and certainly incapable of supplying any

* Of course this line of reasoning tells equally against the marvellous incident of the imprisonment at Jericho hardly six months before of the principal men of the country so that they should be slaughtered, the glaring improbabilities of which have been already shown, for it goes to prove that Josephus, though he worked it into his history, did not credit the tale; just as in the case of Herodotus, it is hard to think that he believed some of the extravagant Egyptian stories told him by his guides in that country (that of Rhampsinitus, for example), though they are inserted in the text of his second book without comment and in as formal a manner as any of the more authentic records.

certificate of the truth of incidents it clumsily borrows and perverts, so equivocal is its own position.

It shall, however, in this matter speak for itself.

After recounting the incident of the wise men's visit and their flight from Bethlehem, it continues:

“Then Herod, perceiving that he was mocked by the Magi, and being enraged, commanded certain men to go and to kill all the children that were in Bethlehem from two years old and under.

“But Mary, hearing that the children were to be killed, being under great fear, took the child and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in an ox manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (!)

We are then told that Elizabeth, who also was in fear as to her son John, went into the mountains, and “instantly the mountain was rent open and received them,” an angel afterwards ministering to them.

The only other allusion to the massacre to be found in ancient times is the following from Macrobius, a writer of whom little definite is known, save that, being a man of high position, he compiled certain works of little value* or literary merit at the decadent period of Honorius, 400 years after the nativity.

In a very rambling series of what may be called essays (the *Saturnalia*), including a collection of *jeux d'esprit*, which, after the fashion of retailers of

* He sometimes, unwittingly, helps us to the topography of ancient Rome, as he knew the city well.

these *facetiae*, he generally attributes to well-known characters, Cicero and Augustus frequently figuring as feeble punsters,* he has the following passage : “ When he (Augustus) learned that among the boys in Syria, younger than two years, that Herod, King of the Jews, commanded to be killed, also a son of his own was slaughtered, said—‘ It is better to be Herod’s pig (*ὑπ*) than his son ! (*υιόν*)’.”

But it has been strangely overlooked by those who, one after another, have appealed to this anecdote as a confirmation of Matthew’s story, that he who makes a jest or pun does not first recount to his auditors the incidents which give rise to it ; all these must to ensure its success be in their minds already ; so that even admitting that Augustus four centuries before uttered this poor pun, the reference to the events which are supposed to prompt it would be but an explanatory gloss by the subsequent recorder of it.

In this case the jest itself gives no support whatever to Matthew’s story—it has nothing to do with it—but the gloss by Macrobius mingles with gross inaccuracy the Christian legend of the Bethlehem massacre with the quite separate historical incident of the execution of Antipater.

Augustus is here represented as so imbecile as to believe that this well-known son of his old acquaintance Herod, a man of quite five-and-forty years of

* That the following jest is in Greek in no wise affects the question, as it is admitted that Augustus rather affected that language (Suet. and Tac.), and it is also conceded that Cicero is not free from the vice of introducing plays upon words in serious matter.

age, who had not long returned from a sojourn at his court and of whom he himself had, after inquiry, just sanctioned the judicial execution, is an infant* and has been included in a reckless and indiscriminate slaughter of other babes!

That such an act of blind fury, such an outrage against an entire race the intense jealousy and fanaticism of which were perfectly well-known to Augustus, with the obvious risk, nay, certainty, of bloody reprisals or even of civil war so repugnant to his instincts and policy, should be esteemed by him as a fitting occasion for a feeble jest is marked by the extremest improbability.

The sanity of the perpetrator and the necessity of at once suppressing him would be the questions uppermost in the minds of his counsellors and himself. There would be little scope for humour for those concerned, however it might appear to Macrobius four centuries afterwards or writers of to-day.

Dr. Ramsay contends (p. 219) that "it is not probable that Macrobius was indebted to a Christian writer for the story, and therefore the story of the massacre of the infants was recorded in some Pagan source," and he notes, "The Pagans of that time were strongly prejudiced against Christians, and not likely to quote them."

The combined incident being hopelessly unhistorical, and therefore certainly not the occasion of

* Herod was then nearly seventy years of age!

any contemporary jest or even comment, it matters little whether Macrobius obtained the blunder from a Pagan or a Christian source. Still, as the question has been raised as though of importance, and might obscure the issue, a few words may be given to it.

When Macrobius wrote two hundred years had passed since Tertullian had penned his plea for the faith of Jesus, and that obsolete writing had been replaced by the plaintive cry for mercy of Symmachus on behalf of the rapidly-expiring Paganism.

The Emperor (Theodosius) himself, a fervent Christian, had bent in penance at the feet of Ambrose ; the temples were closed or converted to Christian use, the priesthoods abolished, their treasures confiscated, for sacrifice or augury the penalty was death, while within its own body the Church with impartiality decreed the same doom for those who celebrated Easter at the date sanctioned by the immediate followers of the Apostles.

Yet men are often better than their laws, and in practice considerable toleration must have existed.* We know that there was an influential but rapidly dwindling body among the senators and higher classes who still clung, at least formally, to the ancient faith of Rome, though forbidden to practise its rites.

In Macrobius's work, modelled, as far as he was capable of copying, on the Augustan lines,

* “The pagans were indulged in the most licentious freedom of speech and writing,” says Gibbon of this period. He probably has in view our author and Claudian.

the heathen mythology is ostentatiously prominent, but this gives no certainty; it is like the affected classical heathenism of the Italian renaissance, in the very shadow of the Vatican, and in a time of similar political and social debasement. Claudian, a contemporary of Macrobius, is equally free with the Olympian deities, yet his real religion is not definitely known to us.*

Whether pagan or not, it is absurd to suppose that Macrobius was in those days unaware of the Christian legend of the nativity, which had been for generations fixed in the canon, read in the churches, taught in the schools; or that knowing it, he would scrupulously avoid using one of its purely secular incidents to give a back-ground to a jest.

Probably, in any case, most of his family would be of the victorious faith.

That this sorry anecdote should be seriously brought forward again and again as a proof of the actuality of the Bethlehem massacre is evidence of the lack of support for it elsewhere.

We have now to see how this absence of external evidence is dealt with in the Enc. Brit. article "Jesus" (p. 661): "The sequel of the story—Herod's jealousy and the massacre of the innocents—has been mainly doubted because it is not mentioned in Josephus. But there must have been hundreds of events of that day of which the Jewish historian has taken

* If he be the Macrobius that exactly at his period held the posts of pro-consul of Africa and Imperial chamberlain, he must have been, at least nominally, a Christian.

no notice, though they were far more sanguinary than the murder of a handful of infants in a little village. The act corresponds to the jealousy and cruelty which were the master-passions of the Idumean usurper, and if Josephus here follows Nicolaus of Damascus we may be quite sure that he would not have mentioned a fact so damaging to his patron. There are, however, two allusions in Josephus which, if they do not specifically indicate this event, yet may well allude to it, or at least show how consonant it was with Herod's impulses, viz., in *Ant.* xvi., 11, 7, where he speaks of Pharisees and others massacred for a prediction that Herod's posterity should not enjoy his crown, and in xvii., 2, 4, where he speaks of a clamour of 'the mothers of those who had been slain by him.' Further, Macrobius speaks of the boys under two years of age whom Herod ordered to be slain in Syria, and although he confuses this with the sentence upon Herod's sons, of whom Antipater was executed within five days of Herod's death, his words may well point to the murder of the children of Bethlehem."

The remarkable assertion that there must have been hundreds of events of that day (necessarily in Palestine, otherwise there is no meaning in the passage) far more sanguinary than the murder of a handful of infants in a little village—"all the coasts thereof" being omitted—is without a shadow of justification; no evidence is forthcoming or possible; and the appeal *ad invidiam* to the already well-blackened character of Herod, in which he is need-

lessly styled the “usurper,” his master Augustus and nearly all of the other potentates of the time equally deserving the epithet, is attempted to be strengthened by the suggestion that Josephus in suppressing any report of an atrocity known to him, follows the court chronicler Nicolaus; though it is plain to any one who takes the trouble to read him that the Jewish historian shows a *naïve* impartiality in using his materials, and avails himself of adulatory or disparaging notices indifferently to build up his story; indeed, soon after we have the wonderful tale—already analysed (p. 60)—of the projected assassination of all the notables, certainly not from Nicolaus’s book.

Concerning these arguments, in the first place, the customary claim of a reference to the massacre by Macrobius has been already dealt with—it is for the reader to judge.

Of the two instances given from Josephus, to show how consonant the slaughter at Bethlehem would be with the ingrained taste for homicide of the King, the first (the reference being incorrectly given) applies to a palace plot in which the chief eunuch, Bagoas, and other officials were implicated in conjunction with certain Pharisees, but which in this article is represented as being simply a prophecy put about that the crown should not descend in Herod’s direct line, upon hearing which the King *massacred* recklessly and ruthlessly.

The real statement of Josephus so rendered by Dean Farrar is that the prediction was that Herod’s reign should cease—a quite different matter—the

crown coming to Pheroras and his wife, while the eunuch accomplice should miraculously have offspring in this new dispensation.

These prophecies were of the kind, then and long after prevalent at Rome, that suggested and urged a fulfilment, and were found always to be incentive to criminal attempts, poisonings, forgeries of wills, &c., &c., and as Tacitus expressly says, provocative of schemes to overthrow princes, the plotters being in *all* cases of detection most rigorously punished.*

That in this instance the Pharisees were not the innocuous seers they are made out to be is definitely shown by the two passages from Josephus now following.

The first relates to an earlier portion of the reign of Herod, when, as Rome's nominee, he was seeking to establish his position: "But for the rest of the multitude he required that they should take an oath of fidelity to him, and at the same time compelled them to swear that they would bear him good-will, and continue to do so during his government, and indeed a great part of them, either from good-will or fear, did what he required; but such as were of a more open disposition, and had indignation at the compulsion, he made away with.†

* See the case of Libo (Tac., Ann. ii., 27 ff.)

† Josephus's loose phrase might here be implied to mean that all who refused to take the oath were slaughtered—a mighty massacre indeed, even if all the non-jurors in the entire kingdom were no more than two or three hundreds. But the historian quickly qualifies this extreme language, for the Essenes were exempt, the Pharisees we shall find by another passage were excused, certain of them by the payment of a small fine, while the Gentiles would have no objection.

"He endeavoured also to persuade Pollio, the Pharisee, and Sameas, and the greater part of their scholars to take the oath, but this they would not do, though they were not punished owing to the King's respect for Pollio. The Essenes also were exempt." (Ant. xv., 10, 4.)

Then, at a considerably later date, when speaking of the intrigues of Pheroras's wife, her mother and sister, and of Doris, which culminated in the palace conspiracy, Josephus says (Ant. xvii, 2, 4): "There was a certain sect of men that were Jews, who valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the laws of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favoured by God, by whom this set of women were inveigled. These are those that are called the sect of the Pharisees, who were on principle opposed to kings. They were a cunning sect and easily brought to the pitch of fighting and doing mischief.

"Accordingly, when all the Jewish people pledged themselves by oath to be faithful to Cæsar* and to the King's Government, these men would not swear, being over 6000; and when the King imposed a fine, it was paid by Pheroras's wife."

He afterwards uses the words, "When Herod had punished those Pharisees who had been convicted of the *foregoing crimes*," &c., &c., and again (even while complaining of Herod's severity), "though the justice of the punishment caused

* This reference to Augustus will be noticed later (see p. 212).

those who perished to be less pitied" (Ant. xvi., 11, 8), which show that the historian did not impute to Herod the punishment of the guiltless by a "massacre," his action thus having no analogy with the insensate deed at Bethlehem attributed to him.

As for the second quotation, nominally from Josephus, the reference is again wrong, nor can the present writer trace it anywhere; besides, Herod would have in Judæa something more to reckon with than the "clamour of the mothers" of those children slain.

It will be seen that there is nothing here which goes to prove that Herod was ready to commit this useless crime, or, in the alternative, may "well point" to its commission.

THE RETURN FROM EGYPT.

The land journey back from Egypt avoiding Judæa and Samaria, the coast line with the sole exception of Gaza also being then under the authority of Archelaus, would entail a most difficult and even dangerous detour; the family must have first traversed the arid steppes of Idumea from west to east, a desolate and almost pathless region and actually Herod's native country, where the influence of his dynasty would be great, so as to gain the southern boundary of the Dead Sea; thence turning northward through the wild and ordinarily hostile land of Moab, where, as the borders of the lake are deeply seamed with precipitous ravines, there is no practicable track save by diverging far to the

east to turn them at a higher level. Thence the long route lies by Areopolis and Hesbon, descending ultimately to the Jordan delta at Livias, the wayfarers then keeping to the malarious east bank of that river until they could cross the corner of Samaria and finally reach Galilee.

But no one would journey from Egypt to Galilee by that route in the days of Augustus if compelled to avoid Judæa; coasting ships were constantly passing between Alexandria or Pelusium and Cæsarea or Tyre, any one of which could have transported the travellers to Galilee without trouble, and at less than a tithe of the expense. There is suspicion that the writer of this portion of the Gospel knew nothing of the nature of the journey he so lightly describes.

And it is difficult to see what advantage could be gained by such a laborious avoidance of Judæa, for if Archelaus was to be dreaded, his brother Antipas "the fox," then Tetrarch of Galilee, in whose dominions Nazareth was, would be for any Messianic pretender at least equally dangerous.*

* He murdered John the Baptist; Josephus expressly says because he feared his influence on the people.

CHAPTER VI.

LUKE'S NARRATIVE (QUIRINIUS, GOVERNOR OF SYRIA).

THE SYRIAN PROVINCE—LIFE OF QUIRINIUS—THE TIBURTINE INSCRIPTION.

AFTER an idyll which breathes the spirit and, we may say, echoes the language of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in which the supernatural largely enters, we are, with the commencement of the second chapter of Luke, abruptly brought in contact with the every-day world—an edict of Augustus is recorded, the Roman governor of Syria is named, and we are told of a system of census carried out by his orders, at all events in Palestine.

As acute controversy exists as to the historic truth of what is here recorded, or even its probability, a careful review of all known details and arguments is demanded, and as everything turns on the precise meaning of Luke's words, they are now put before the reader according to the "revised" version: "Now it came to pass in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governing Syria. And all went to enrol themselves, every one to his

own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem—because he was of the house and family of David—to enrol himself with Mary his wife."

It will be noticed that the phrase of the authorised version, "should be taxed," is here given as "should be enrolled," a far more accurate rendering of the Greek *ἀπογράφεσθαι*, which implies merely the actual inscription, not any possibly resultant monetary levy; also that the official who had before figured as "Cyrenius" (a double distortion of name owing to its appearance in Luke and Josephus in a Greek dress as *Κυρηνίος*, and afterwards undergoing a defective English transliteration), is now a fairly well-known personage, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius.

As the question whether Quirinius governed Syria during the lifetime of Herod (that is before B.C. 4) is of vital import to the credit of Luke and the possibility of his story, he being represented as conducting a census in Palestine inferentially (but indubitably as will be seen later) during that monarch's reign, it is necessary to put before the reader what is known respecting him; a brief reference to the system pursued at that date in the government of that province, and to certain events at Rome which bear on incidents in his life being first supplied.

Neither the rugged province of Bithynia-Pontus nor the upland and almost roadless region of Cappadocia offered a route by which a formidable

inroad from Eastern Asia into the Roman world would be easily practicable in Augustus's days, while towards the desert frontier of Palestine the State's trusty dependent, Herod, could be relied on to watch and give a good account of the turbulent Arabs, whose intrigues and tactics Augustus was well aware he understood far better than the Roman commanders ; but where the shore line of the Mediterranean, after long trending eastward, bends at the Gulf of Issus abruptly to the south, to form the coasts of Syria and Phœnicia, the real open road to and from the East existed.

Close to this re-entering angle had been judiciously founded by the Seleucidæ their capital, Antioch, afterwards the seat of the Roman Governor of the Syrian province, from which city good roads led within easy striking distance to the Euphrates at Thapsacus, a practicable ford, or further up stream to the ancient Carchemish.

By this route armies had passed from the distant times when, under the Thothmes kings, the Egyptians had invaded Syria, and when under Sargon and his successors the Assyrians had returned the visit. It was the strategical importance of this sea-base which had impelled Alexander, before following up the Persians after their defeat at Issus, to pass down and subdue the whole of the Syrian coast, and caused the pertinacity with which he prosecuted the sieges of Tyre and Gaza.

This open gateway to and from the east, in days when troubles with the Parthians were a constant

contingency to be provided against, needed the most vigilant watch, six legions being commonly allotted to Syria, though not solely for the service of that province but as a fund to draw upon should troubles arise in the neighbouring governments.

While insisting on the Senate retaining the privilege of making the most dignified appointments to the government of the settled provinces, Augustus had astutely claimed the responsibility of selecting and directly guiding the administrators of those newly acquired or abutting on a dangerous frontier, and therefore demanding the vigilance of an Imperator and the presence of a large proportion of the legions.*

These high officials, the governors of provinces, were uniformly selected from senators who had passed the consulship or praetorship; those nominated by the Senate having the title "*pro-consul*," and those chosen by the Imperator to administer in his name that of "*legatus pro-prætore*."

Egypt alone was in this differently dealt with; there was no danger of revolution among its long subjected people; it had become the granary of Rome, and as owing to its isolated position it had

* The division of the provinces between the Imperator and the Senate took place in B.C. 27, "but sometimes he (Augustus) made exchanges," says Suetonius (Aug. xlvi.), showing that there was no hard and fast distribution; nor were the boundaries of the provinces always definitely fixed, for Strabo (xviii., 3, 25) tells us "to the former provinces Cæsar appoints governors and administrators, dividing the countries sometimes in one way sometimes in another, directing his political conduct according to circumstances."

been during the civil wars a retreat from which it had been difficult to dislodge defeated factionaries, the risk of its being permanently detached from the Empire (as might have been quite recently the case had not Antony's policy been guided by the fatal incapacity and imprudence of Cleopatra), resulting probably in famine throughout Italy, demanded special arrangements for its control. Senators and men of influence were forbidden even to visit Egypt without special permission; Germanicus himself was heavily censured by Tiberius for making an unauthorised tour through the country. Tacitus (Ann. ii., 59) tells us that "Augustus among other secret plans for power had appropriated Egypt and restrained the senators and equites from going there without licence, as he apprehended that Italy might be reduced to famine by means of any who had seized that province, the key to the Empire by sea and land and defensible by a small garrison against large armies."*

The term of the Senate's appointments was usually one year only, those of the Imperator had an ordinary duration of three years, as a shorter term would have rendered the management of the less settled provinces very erratic, but this limit was rarely extended.† It must be remembered that

* We have a later instance of this in the caution of Vespasian, who first secured Egypt, knowing that from thence he could command Rome by intercepting its supplies.

† He extended the term of existing provincial governors, after the disaster to Varus's legions, on account of the possible dangers of having new men in office at such a crisis (Suet., Aug. xxiii.).

at the date we have to consider, not much more than twenty years had elapsed since the final cessation of the long series of civil wars and commotions ; the new Julian dynasty was not yet consolidated, republican forms were still maintained, the Imperatorship being granted and accepted only for a period and solemnly renewed at intervals, while the Senate was treated with habitual deference as of great importance and dignity.

Augustus would inevitably feel it to be imprudent to allow any provincial authority to become too well established, and a prescriptive right to spring up similar to that which he was skilfully constructing for himself and his successors ; he could not, besides, be unmindful of the danger from personal attachment to a commander, such as in the case of the Gallic legions had secured the position of his grand-uncle, and thus indirectly brought about his own advancement.

Later, under Tiberius, when a despotism had been generally accepted, there was less danger from provincial governors, and their term of office could be somewhat extended.

Syria, as the most important military station in the East, was, as may be imagined, administered directly by Augustus through his "legatus," but no definite statement is possible as to the extent of the province actually under direct Roman rule, it varying much according to the exigencies of political arrangements, Palestine in the whole or part, for instance, being at times absorbed, as was also the outlying

district of Commagene towards the north, which was sometimes held by dependent monarchs, sometimes annexed.

As Cilicia, another bordering country, will be much in evidence in this investigation, it is necessary to say something respecting it.

The broad divisions of Cilicia were into the lowland and the mountain districts, a glance at the map showing us that the great Taurus range, running from east to west, approaches the coast in the western portion of that country, so that the mountains there encroach on the shore line.

Towards the east, the plain being wider, the district had long been civilised, and boasted of large and opulent cities, Tarsus being the principal, and this portion, known as "Cilicia Pedias," was directly under the rule of Rome as an annex to the Syrian province. The western portion, the "rugged" Cilicia ("*Cilicia Tracheia*") had a much more complex character; the sea coast was well supplied with good harbours, and when the piracy which had infested it had been put down, was valuable for its ports of call, and the trade in the oak for shipbuilding which came down from the higher region.

This portion of the nominal Cilicia would seem to have been habitually, as far as possible, placed under the rule of native kings and princes, and even if for a time annexed was indisputably again distributed to local rulers.

Strabo (xiv., 5, 6) says: "As the country was

well adapted by nature for robbery by land and sea (by land on account of the extent of the mountains and the nations situated beyond them and occupying plains and large tracts of cultivated country easy to be overrun, by sea on account of the supply of timber for shipbuilding, and the harbours, fortresses, and places of retreat), for all these reasons, the Romans thought it preferable that the country should be under the government of kings, than be subject to Roman governors sent to administer justice, who would not be always on the spot, nor attended by an army."

Among these mountains we find from history the names of three semi-barbarous races—first, the Isaurians in the north-west corner of the highlands, who, from their fastnesses indulging in raids on the inner plateau of Iconium, were subjugated B.C. 78—76 by Servilius; second, the Homonadenses, to be presently mentioned, who appear to have inhabited the region bordering on Pisidia (Strabo); third, the Clitæ, to be later spoken of, who, from the direction of their incursions, would appear to have held the lateral valleys and craggy heights more to the east.

Augustus, who when quite young had married Scribonia, much older than himself, soon divorced her, and at the age of twenty-five married Livia Drusilla, herself a divorced wife, to whom throughout his life he remained much attached and who survived him.

Scribonia had already borne him a daughter, Julia,

who was afterwards married several times; in the first place to Marcellus; secondly to Agrippa, by whom she had two sons, L. and C. Cæsar, to be presently referred to; and after his death in B.C. 8, thirdly, to Tiberius, from which time her conduct became so shameless that her father in the end was forced to banish her.

Augustus's second wife, Livia, though she bore to him no children, had had by her former husband a son—Tiberius, just referred to—who, of high intelligence and warlike qualifications, did, after he had grown to manhood, good service with the legions and in diplomacy in Spain, Armenia, Gaul, Rhætia, Pannonia, and finally in Germany.

But in B.C. 7 Tiberius, on leaving the command in Germany and celebrating his second triumph in Rome, being also a second time consul and aged thirty-five, suddenly withdrew himself from the Capital and from public affairs, and in spite of the entreaties of his mother the Empress, and to the astonishment of the world, retired to Rhodes, where he lived for eight years in a private station, affecting the society of the philosophical and literary group that then had its centre in that island.

It is almost impossible to doubt that an avowed intention of the Imperator to nominate the two young princes, Lucius and Caius, the sons of his daughter, as the next heirs was the real cause of this abrupt abstention on the part of Tiberius.

During his retirement in Rhodes, changes were taking place in Rome. In the year A.D. 1 a

revolution that had occurred in Armenia called for some authoritative intervention and, Tiberius being unavailable, the young Caius Cæsar, then in his twenty-first year, was sent as the Imperial representative to the East, but to a certain extent under tutelage, Lollius, and on his death Quirinius, having the position of adviser ("rector"). Soon after Caius's departure his brother Lucius died at Massilia, Quirinius marrying his destined bride.

Augustus, who had had two strings to his bow, in his scheme to found a dynasty in the direct Julian line, would now probably turn more favourably towards the recluse of Rhodes, his wife's son, whose ability was well known; at any rate a reconciliation was brought about, and Tiberius, returning to Rome, took part again in affairs of State (in August, A.D. 2).

Soon after (in February, A.D. 4) Caius Cæsar died in the East from a wound received, and Tiberius became the acknowledged heir to the Empire.

We now turn to Quirinius, of whose life Tacitus (Ann. iii., 48), after recording the public funeral granted to him, gives a slight sketch, a translation of which is now offered, though, as the terse epigrammatic style of that great writer often renders various interpretations possible, the text is also appended.* "Quirinius" (he says) "by no

* "Nihil ad veterem et patriciam Sulpiciorum familiam Quirinius pertinuit, ortus apud municipium Lanuvium; sed impiger militiæ et acribus ministeriis consulatum sub divo Augusto, mox expugnatis per Ciliciam Homonadensium castellis insignia triumphi adeptus;

means belonged to the old and patrician Sulpician family, but came of a Lanuvian stock; however, being bold in war and employed in hazardous enterprises, he obtained the consulate under the divine Augustus, and having soon after, by traversing Cilicia, captured the fortresses of the Homonadenses and received the insignia of a triumph, was nominated adviser to Caius Cæsar, then ruling Armenia. All the time that Tiberius was living at Rhodes he had kept up friendly relations with him, a circumstance which Tiberius himself on that occasion publicly announced in the Senate, extolling him for his disinterested friendship, while denouncing Lollius as the cause of the ill-feeling and misunderstanding between Caius Cæsar and himself.* However, the memory of Quirinius was not cherished by his colleagues on account of the peril in which he had involved Lepida (as I have already narrated), and his avaricious and overbearing old age."

datusque rector Gaio Cæsari Armeniam obtinenti Tiberium quoque Rhodi agentem coluerat; Quod tunc palefecit in senatu laudatis in se officiis et incusato Marco Lollo quem auctorem Gaio Cæsari pravitatis et discordiarum arguebat. Sed ceteris haud læta memoria Quirinii erat ob intenta, ut memoravi, Lepidæ pericula, sordidamque et præpotentem senectam" (Ann. iii., 48).

* We are told by Suetonius (Tib. xii.) that "Tiberius—after the lapse, in B.C. 1, of his tribunician power, which would have protected him—was living at Rhodes in dread and obscurity; and paying a visit to his stepson, Caius Cæsar, in Samos, discovered that he was greatly prejudiced against him through the calumnies of his adviser, M. Lollius."

Tiberius, therefore, would, on his return to Rome, be desirous of putting a partisan of his own into that position, and would speak in his favour in the Senate.

Even from Tacitus's brief summary it will be apparent that Quirinius was a man of importance in the days of Augustus, but apart from this special notice, we know that his consulship was held in B.C. 12; that on the early death of Lucius Cæsar the lady Lepida, his betrothed, was given by Augustus to Quirinius, and that he many years afterwards, when a divorce had taken place, charged her with attempting to foist a child on him and to poison him.* We also know through Josephus of a Syrian governorship beginning in A.D. 6, during which he carried out the census and valuation of Judæa and Samaria on the revocation of Archelaus.

He died in A.D. 21, and if at that date he was seventy-five (he is spoken of as old), the dates would be—born in B.C. 55, consul at the age of forty-three, married Lepida at the ripe age of fifty-seven, and made the Syrian census aged sixty-one.

A fragment of an inscribed marble slab, which had obviously formed part of a monumental tomb, found near Tibur (Tivoli) about a century and a half ago, and now in the Lateran museum, having been frequently and ably edited, is claimed to be applicable to Quirinius and to show that that official *twice* governed Syria, thereby at first sight rendering possible the literal truth of Luke, when the birth of Jesus under his rule takes place during Herod's reign.

* This explains the reference to Lepida in Tacitus's passage already given.

The actual remaining inscription is now given, which for the benefit of any whose Latin may have grown rusty, might be Englished as follows:—

King which being reduced under the power
of Augustus and the Roman people the Senate
twofold supplications on account of the matter *successfully*
to himself the ornaments of a triumph
Pro-Consul the province of Asia obtaining
of the divine Augustus again Syria and *Phœnicia*

It may be gathered from this fragment, which, it will be observed, carries no name, (1) that the subject of it had conquered for Rome some state or people; (2) that in consequence he had been honoured by a double triumphal ceremony and the recognised "*ornamenta*"; (3) that he had afterwards held the consular appointment of Governor of Asia; and (4) that he *again* (*iterum*) had obtained the Imperial legateship of Syria and *Phœnicia*.

This is all that can be legitimately deduced from the stone itself, the ingenious completions of it suggested by the learned, in which the principal actions of Quirinius are introduced, being purely conjectural, except for a few words, which, owing to the necessities of grammatical construction, are inevitably linked with the preserved portion.

As to the interpretation the following comments are necessary:—

First. ". . . gem," the fag-end of a word at the beginning of the fragment, is, in order to apply it to Quirinius, made to come into a sentence as "*regem*," and refer to the King Amyntas of

IM·QVAR EDACIA·INPO
VGSTI·POVLI·QVEROMANI·SENAT
SVPPLICATIONESBINASOBRESPROSP
RISI·ORNAMENTA·TRIVMPI
PRO·CENSUSVLEASIAM·PROVINCIAM·C
DIVI·IAMSITI·TERRAS·ASYRIA·M·ET·P

Galatia, who, after a successful campaign against the bordering Homonadenses, lost his life by a stratagem ; the decisive warlike operations, for which the unknown received the double "supplicatio," being made out to be those which we historically know, from Strabo, Tacitus, and Pliny, were long afterwards carried through in that region by Quirinius.

But if vengeance for Amyntas's death was a motive for the expedition, its delay for nearly twenty years, during which there was certainly little occupation for the Syrian legions, is not easily explicable ; while, if it were not a cause, the introduction into the inscription of this ancient history of the troubles of a tributary king *favoured by Antony* is surprising.

Moreover, at that date the title of king abounded. We find it in Germany, in Thrace beyond the Danube, in Cilicia, in Africa for instance ; nor can it be shown that the word here applies to any one country, so that the inscription cannot be thus identified. While if the word after all should be "legem," and it would not be a heavy task to compose a sentence in which it would be appropriate, all this shadowy and indirect reference to the Homonadenses, and therefore to Quirinius, disappears.

Second. The Homonadenses inhabited a rugged and remote mountain district, among ridges, deep valleys, and vast forests, where they had a fortified town, Homona, as well as detached strongholds,

to the number of forty-four, among the craggy heights.*

A campaign against them would be of a similar character to that which we are now and then compelled to carry on against our border Afghan tribes ; like these from their fortified towers in the recesses of the hills they made raids. They would not be numerous, for Strabo (xii., 6, 5) speaks only of about 4000 men, "all the able-bodied" being, after the capture of their strongholds, distributed in the neighbouring districts—a small number indeed, unless the slaughter had been something phenomenal.

A double "supplicatio"† or religious celebration with the grant of decorations would at first sight seem unlikely as well as improper to be bestowed for the suppression of a not numerous mountain people, principally, as we are told, by means of famine, in a warfare without danger to the State, though troublesome and costly perhaps ; it is not like a repulse of a Parthian inroad or victories beyond the Rhine.

* Tacitus, it will have been observed, uses the singular phrase "*per Ciliciam*" in recording Quirinius's attack on the Homonadenses, and as King Amyntas of Galatia in his unlucky campaign against them many years before had advanced against them from the north, the historian may have wished to emphasise that the Roman general advanced through the southern passes. The suggestion that the phrase may mean that this local mountain people were scattered generally throughout Cilicia, and thus be *Syrian* provincials, hardly calls for refutation here, though it will be again referred to.

† The *supplicatio* was a thanksgiving to the Gods for the success of the Roman arms ; it did not need the presence of the victorious general, as did the much more important and splendid "Triumph." (See Livy, xxxiii., 24.)

Yet it must be admitted that the dearth under Augustus of sensational wars would necessarily give greater value to small successes, and Suetonius (Aug. xxxviii.) says of the Imperator, "He was unsparing in the reward of military merit, having granted to above thirty generals the honour of the greater triumph; besides which, he took care to have triumphal decorations voted by the Senate for more than that number."

On the other hand, it is obvious that these widely distributed gifts of military distinctions render the attribution of the inscription to any one individual most uncertain.

Third. There is no evidence direct or indirect, though it is extremely likely, that Quirinius was ever pro-consul of Asia, thus there is no identification in this particular.

If the name in the following passage of Florus be not an error (it is disputed) it is very strong evidence against an Asian governorship, as it was not customary to bestow both Asia and Africa successively on any one individual.

"Augustus assigned the Marmaridæ and Garamantes (African tribes) to Quirinius to subdue, who might have returned with the surname of Marmaricus had he not been too modest in valuing his victory." (Florus iv.)

Fourth. What is the meaning of the "iterum" in the inscription? Does it, as many contend, indicate a previous appointment to the selfsame government as legatus of the divine Augustus?

May it not have an alternative meaning, viz., that having acted as *legatus* in some province mentioned in the missing portion of the marble, and after the grant of a double “*supplicatio*,” having besides held the senatorial office of *pro-consul* of Asia, the subject of the inscription was *again* given by Augustus the dignity of *legatus pro-prætore*—this time for the Syrian and Phœnician province? *

Had *this* province been named on the lost portion of the stone as the scene of an earlier enjoyment of the *pro-prætorship* it would hardly on its repetition be reproduced with the needless official accuracy of including Phœnicia in describing it!

However, arguments by experts or others upon the correct application of Latin terms are here rendered of less value owing to the fact that laudatory epigraphs such as this are too often in all ages the composition of high-placed individuals, satisfied that they possess the gift of lucid exposition with a blend of epigrammatic neatness, whose efforts it would have been in their day imprudent to criticise.

Augustus himself, to go no further, wrote the inscription for Drusus’s tomb,† and the fashion would be followed by others possibly not so well qualified.‡

* Zumpt, a weighty grammatical authority, says (p. 76): “Whoever is called *legatus pro prætore iterum* may have been Imperial legate first in one province and next in another.” (“Wer *legatus pro prætore iterum* genannt wird, kann erst, in einen, denn in einen andern provinz kaiserlicher Legate gewesen sein.”)

† Suet., Claud. i.

‡ That modern grammarians are not always satisfied with ancient monumental Latin may be seen in Zumpt’s amusing stricture on the inscription of *Æmilius Secundus*. (See note, p. 171.)

It is altogether too much to say that none other in Augustus's time fulfilled the conditions detailed on this fragment of stone, while we see there are grave difficulties attending such an attribution; there would be in his reign, for instance, more than thirty pro-consuls of Asia, and perhaps a dozen governors of Syria, concerning most of whom we know little or nothing; as also how the eastern legions were employed throughout these years.

Sentius Saturninus has been suggested as the subject of this inscription, and the double "supplicatio" would seem more explicable in the case of one who, when legatus in Belgic Gaul, was enabled through the dread of his warlike reputation to obtain important treaties with powerful Germanic tribes on two separate occasions, and even if he died before Augustus, the term "divine Augustus" only proves that the monument was erected after the death of that Emperor.

But even assuming it proved that Quirinius is here referred to,* and that he held the government of Syria at a date prior to his historic rule beginning in A.D. 6, it follows that the pro-prætor in possession in B.C. 9 being Titius, who was at that date superseded by Sentius Saturninus, and he in his turn by Quintilius Varus, who ruled at all events until

* This possibility becomes certainty in the description affixed to the stone in the Papal museum, viz., "Fragmentum epitaphii P. Sulpicii Quirini prædis Syriae quem Lucas evang: commemorat."

The last four words disclose the motive of this improper statement.

the autumn of B.C. 4, many months after Herod's death, the only years available for a first term of office begin at that date, and it would thus be incapable of being reconciled with Luke's story.

We are also without any *historic* evidence for or against such a term of office in Syria, owing not only to the very scanty details given of that special time by Josephus (explicable perhaps by the ceasing of Nicolaus's annals on which he was accustomed to lean), but also to a less easily explained gap in Dion Cassius's history, which leaves vacant almost the same years, the only known fact, valueless in this matter, being that in A.D. 4, Volusius Saturninus was acting as pro-prætor in that province.

CHAPTER VII.

LUKE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED (UNIVERSAL CENSUS)).

THE ROMAN PROVINCES—THEIR GOVERNMENT—THE TAXATION SYSTEM—IMPERFECTIONS OF IMPERIAL METHODS—IMPROBABILITY OF A GENERAL CENSUS.

WE have now to examine the question of the probability that Augustus at some date prior to B.C. 7 issued a remarkable decree, for which we have the authority of Luke alone, that a registration or enrolment of all inhabitants of the Empire, without regard to race or position, Roman citizens or low-born provincials, Italian landowners or semi-barbarous subjects of a subject king, should be held either as an exceptional or periodic computation.

If we take the most cursory view of the Roman world in the time of Augustus, we find that within the space of two hundred years what is now Spain, France, Central Europe south of the Danube, Switzerland, Greece and its islands, with Turkey in Europe, Asia Minor, all Syria, Egypt, Tunis, and Tripoli (a large portion including nearly all France, Syria, Egypt, &c., even within from fifty to thirty years), had been reduced into the form of provinces or was ruled by subject kings, not to mention outlying lands in process of absorption.

These enormous territories, some quite recently acquired and far from assimilated, others longer under subjection and partly reconciled, were peopled by races with every variation of language, custom, law, and religion ; ranging, besides, from the culture of Achaia and the pre-historic civilisation of Egypt to the turbulent semi-barbarism of inner Africa or Armenia.

Though combined resistance to Roman domination was at an end, there were to be found now and again local and partial outbreaks in the less settled districts, which demanded the presence of the legions, so that (as with ourselves) a little war was almost always on hand.

Gaul, even in its southern portion, the civilised Gallia Narbonensis, after a period of depression and revolt due to the rapacity of the officials, had only then been coming into better times under the mild and judicious rule of Drusus, while in the north the Frisians had been giving employment to the legions ; Spain had been the seat of quite recent grave troubles requiring the presence of the Imperator ; the ridges of the Taurus had been and were then the nucleus of guerilla warfare ; again there was Armenia restless, intriguing with the Parthians, and rejecting the king placed over it, so that a little later Augustus had to send his grandson and his legions to settle matters.

In many cases the “hinterland” of the countries annexed had always been ill-defined even in the times of their own monarchs, fluctuating according

to the accidents of war or aggression;* there was no “scientific frontier” anywhere; conflict with untamed races beyond was inevitable, and as has been the case with our own possessions, it often proved necessary to push the nominal boundary further so as to render it more stable or defensible.

Even in these days of infinitely greater resource we do not attempt to apply a uniform system of control to such varied portions of our Empire as Canada, Ceylon, and Sierra Leone, for instance—and the racial extremes of the Roman provinces were at least equally diverse—and even taking a single colony, our neighbours, though formalists and systematists, do not in Algeria govern their own colonials and the Kabyles on the same lines, nor is the foreign resident in Egypt subject to the same code as the fellah, diversity of race compelling difference of treatment.

Though Sulla converted the former indefinite contributions of the Asiatics into fixed taxes assessed on the different divisions, according to valuation rolls drawn up, Asia being divided into forty districts, this was all upset again by the protracted civil wars that followed, during which region after region was temporarily detached from the Roman centre, irregular contributions or “benevolences” to supply funds and material for a campaign being the hurried substitutes for any systematic assessment.†

* The ancient geographers widely differ as to the boundaries of Bithynia. Galatia was also a vague term, and Strabo shows that the western limit of Cilicia was quite arbitrary.

† In Cæsar (*Civil War* iii., 31, 32) will be found a striking instance of the abuse of this summary process, only eighteen years before Augustus’s succession to power.

Under the too brief rule of the enlightened Caius Julius Cæsar as "censor morum," among the great schemes for the development and reform of the ancient plans of government, a better taxation system than was then in existence was doubtless included, and was even brought practically forward, at all events in Italy itself, if we place the extant inscription—the famous but undated "Table of Heraclea"—under his dictatorship; and though his untimely death for a time paralysed many of these projects, a little later, after Actium had conclusively placed the control of the world in the hands of his fortunate grandnephew, such matters of detail were taken up again under happier auspices, a geographical and statistical synopsis of the extent and resources of the Empire being compiled, reference to which will be made later.

As the governors of provinces were exclusively drawn from the senatorial body, the members of which were alone legally eligible, it will be as well to review the recorded policy and actions of this class in Italy itself, and show what they had done for their own country, by which we may justly infer what treatment they might be expected to bestow on subject races.

As a result of successful wars ending in constantly increased dominion, and the consequent desire of the commons to reap some benefit therefrom, corn requisitioned in large quantities, first from Sicily, then from Africa, and later from Egypt, distributed by the State at a low price to the populace, had for

many years undersold, and therefore superseded, that of Italy, crushing the small farmer, in the old time the most reliable soldier. Grass, demanding less labour than cereals, with the vine and olive both more profitable, now mainly occupied the lands of central Italy. The small but populous towns that in the early period were scattered thickly throughout Latium had died out, in part destroyed in war, in part dismantled by Rome in pursuance of a settled policy of repressing all local rivalry;* and though it is true that geological movements were altering the face of the country, the slope of its watersheds, and the tilt of its coast line, this cause alone would not have effected the depopulation which, dating from the predominance of Rome, still exists; for the industry and ingenuity of man, if untrammelled, could have easily kept pace with the tardy action of natural movements.

The small landholders, Roman citizens, having been to some degree expatriated, through the temptation offered of great advantages to be granted to colonies of them; then became developed those enormous domains, the much censured but constantly increasing "latifundia," which Pliny (N. H. xviii., 35) says had in his time ruined Italy, and of which Quintilian remarks that the wide lands once maintaining a large number of citizens form but the

* Pliny (N. H. iii., 9), after giving the long list of the populous towns which had once surrounded Rome, ends by saying, "Thus we see fifty-three peoples of ancient Latium have passed away without leaving any traces of their existence."

garden of a single noble—a solitude prevailing over the whole country.

The tenant-farmer system not being customary, such estates were in the hands of the patrician or capitalist proprietors themselves, and cultivated by swarms of slaves captured in war, bred for sale, or purchased at the mart of Delos or elsewhere, the piracy and slave-trading of the East having for long been stimulated and supported by the enormous Roman demand (Strabo). These rural slaves, who ranked with the cattle, were subject to a severe discipline and were re-sold when past work; there was a gradation of them, the Sardinian breed being reputed the worst in all respects.*

Instances of the almost incredible luxury of the Roman magnates are too well known to need repeating here, suffice it to say that Greece was robbed of its treasures of art, and every region, however remote, of its products, to supply Rome and the innumerable villas that filled the most eligible environs and the choicest sites on the beautiful Campanian coast. Freed-men and men of low degree who had acquired wealth, often by the most nefarious or morally disgraceful means, naturally followed the example of their superiors. In defending himself against the charge of undue extravagance in his villa at Tusculum, Lucullus can plead that the house of a man of

* Tacitus (Ann. iv., 27), speaking of an attempted agrarian revolt (in A.D. 24), refers to “the alarm owing to the multitude of slaves, who were increasing immensely, while the free-born commons were daily dwindling.”

merely equestrian rank and another of a freed-man on the same hill are quite as important as his.

Pliny even tells us (N. H. xxxi., 25) that some of the wealthy men had the almost incredible audacity to divert the water of one of the aqueducts supplying the capital, for the convenience of their estates, "to the great detriment of the public health."*

There had been constant endeavours by far-seeing statesmen to counteract these tendencies, but the patrician and capitalist influence was too strong. The colonies of the less wealthy classes which Sulla had placed on the land in Italy hoping to stay the emigration movement, had been, in spite of restrictions as to alienation of their holdings within a considerable term of years, surely and steadily bought out by the large proprietors.

Cæsar and Augustus, who gave in vain good standards of simplicity of manners, found this luxury and depopulation impossible to control. The acute and trained intelligence of Tiberius made him fully aware of their danger to the commonwealth, and till the last aberration of his strange life, he, by precept and example, resolutely discouraged the reckless and selfish extravagance of the time,† though with characteristic prudence

* Pliny also tells us (N. H. xxxiii., 50) of a man he knew in Gaul, of merely equestrian rank, who carried with him in his campaigns a silver service weighing 12,000lb.

† Tac. (Ann. iv., 7) says of him at this time, "The Imperator's lands in Italy were small and thinly scattered; the behaviour of his slaves modest; the freedmen in his house few; his disputes with private individuals were determined by the law courts."

declining the invidious as well as hopeless task of personally interfering as to its repression. (Tac., Ann. iii., 52 ff.)

These wealthy aristocrats, having the exclusive privilege of governing all the settled provinces, jealously held the reversion to them in due term as fields of plunder, though knowing little or nothing of the subject populations and entering in no way into their feelings and life. The term of office was far too short to render acquaintance with the language of the people possible, even if all exotic tongues, the Greek excepted, had not been deemed barbarous, and the official, aware that he would never again after his term had expired be brought into contact with the race he then ruled, would be restrained by no sense of shame, merely hastening during the very few months at his disposal to enrich himself at the expense of the subject community so as to return, well compensated for a short exile, to the delights of the capital.

. A large proportion of the enormous wealth of the Roman magnates, of which we read, must have been derived from the plunder of the provinces ; their own writers continually and shamelessly confess it, and there is no other source possible.*

They were forbidden to embark in commercial

* One instance is introduced here, as the official mentioned is concerned in this narrative. Velleius Paterculus (ii., 117) speaking of Q. Varus, says : " How far he was from despising money, Syria, of which he had been governor, afforded proof ; for going, a poor man, into that province he became a rich man, and left it a poor province."

speculation or trading; house property and lands had been for long taken up and would not be ordinarily available, except at full market prices. Nor can it be pleaded that this oppression and misgovernment of the provincials were but the outcome of the anarchy and licence of the civil wars, being afterwards lessened or ended, and that the black case of Verres was exceptional; for, from the reign of Augustus to that of Nero, a continued series of protests and appeals against the extortions and outrages of their governors from provinces ranging from Spain to Bithynia may be extracted from the pages of Tacitus alone.

That there was no bond of fellowship between the governors and the governed even in a better time is shown when the younger Pliny neither knows nor cares to know what are the tenets of those strange people the "Christiani," who are disturbing the population of his province and leading them to forsake the temples; and it is only too plain that in appealing for counsel to Trajan he does not fear that in the eyes of his master he is blameworthy in failing to investigate this social upheaval.

As a matter of fact, it was only under the Antonines that the education of the young, the succour of the orphan, the weak, and the old, and the protection of the slave, were recognised as matters demanding the attention of the State.

Perhaps enough has been said to show that the

enormous territory that composed the Roman world formed anything but a well-compacted, accurately bounded, or definitely regulated realm ; but that, on the contrary, it was a chance agglomeration, not in Augustan times, nor indeed ever for its greater extent, fated to undergo development upon Roman models, but to revert instead to its original types and work out its own destiny.

These are hardly the conditions of government and governors under which we might expect a minute and accurate enumeration of the population of any single province, putting aside the project of a universal enrolment, a scheme demanding, even its simplest form, the nicest adjustments to prevent grievous omission or overlapping, to be planned, still less, carried out.

The imposts which these governors of provinces were empowered to levy were not necessarily more severe than those of native princes ; sometimes, indeed, we find them less rigorous (*Tac.*, *Ann. ii.*, 56), but it was in the arbitrary exactions not for the Imperial exchequer which a temporary and unscrupulous ruler and his satellites could inflict that the gravest wrongs existed, and occasioned the frequent appeals to Rome itself of which we read.

The Roman joint-stock companies that farmed many of the taxes, especially the indirect (the complex collection of which the Treasury thereby avoided), and who again sublet them, would expect a large profit from their speculation after the demands of the State had been satisfied, as would also their

subordinates in every grade,* so that merciless enforcement of legal dues, and extortions beyond them, supported by all sorts of legal chicane,† would be inevitable.

A strong side-light on the incidence of this system is thrown by one of the papyri extracted from the Oxyrhynchus dust-heaps, and dating from the first century A.D. In it we find the nome officials in a dilemma, for they have fixed the minimum amount to be paid by the contractor for certain taxes so high that bidders do not come forward, a fact which illustrates how closely the fleece of the provincial was shorn. (*Oxyrhynchus* i., 100.)

Another papyrus, though three centuries later in date, shows the minute inquisition of the fiscal system. It is a declaration under oath by an egg-seller of the city that he will not sell eggs save in open market, for, of course, any disposed of privately would escape the market tax (*Oxyrh.* i., 145). These dues, we learn from Josephus (*Ant.* xviii., 4, 3), were even in much earlier days greatly objected to.

How can we rightly speak of the "order and method" of Roman provincial administration in matters of taxation when the experienced Tiberius, in his clear-sighted but bitterly cynical manner, can

* See Tacitus (*Ann.* xiii., 50, 51), as to the extortion of tax-gatherers in Nero's time.

† We may notice in *Florus* (iv., 12) the special vindictiveness with which the Germans after the slaughter of Varus's legions pursued the pleaders of the Roman tribunals.

enforce by a parable his reluctance to change too soon a provincial governor by likening him and his subordinates to noxious insects, fortunately by that time almost satiated with blood, and in pity to their victims not lightly to be changed for others of the species yet ungorged! (Jos., Ant. xviii., 6, 5).

In the scattered hints we obtain from Roman writers, often loosely worded and capable of various interpretations, there is no evidence of uniformity of taxation in the provinces; on the contrary much to show that there were exceptions on all sides, districts and cities being favoured or punished, while whole communities of colonists and free cities were definitely exempt,* and other half civilised populations might be made to contribute in hides, or in dates, in a hut-tax, or even in military service alone.

Supplies for troops, delivery of grain for the capital levied on certain regions and countries, provision of ships and sailors by maritime districts, &c., &c., would be *instead of* other imposts, not added to a list common to all.

* In Beotica, the finest province in Spain, the country of the Guadalquivir, including Cordova, Seville, and Cadiz, Pliny (N. H. iii., 3) names nine towns as colonies, eight as municipal, twenty-nine with later conferred Latin rights, while six are free towns, three federate, and 120 tributary—thus with many nice gradations between freedom from taxation and full liability. Achaia was for long exceptionally favoured, and some of the islands, Rhodes, Samos, for instance, remained free till much later. The list of anomalies could be much extended if necessary. For instance, neither Marseilles nor the cities dependent on it were under the sway of the governors of Gallia Narbonensis, in which they formed enclaves. (Strabo.)

Hausrath indeed says "All the Roman provinces had to pay certainly two direct contributions—a poll-tax and a land-tax," but of this sweeping generalisation he does not offer a shred of valid evidence, the passages from Josephus, Tacitus, and Livy, to which he appeals in support, being all singularly inapposite, *e.g.*, Josephus (Ant. xviii., 4, 3) speaks of a tax *on produce bought and sold* that was remitted; we know elsewhere from him (xvii., 8, 4), that this *indirect* tax was a great grievance. Tacitus (Ann. i., 78) is speaking of a petition by the Spaniards, to be relieved from the "*Centesima*"—a tax of one in a hundred on all sales—also an *indirect or market tax*.

In Tacitus (Ann. xiii., 50, 51) we are told that Nero thinks of abolishing all duties, but these are clearly *indirect*, for it is pointed out to the Emperor that were he to do so, relief from tribute ("tributum soli," *i.e.*, land tax) would be soon demanded. Tacitus afterwards refers to the fortieth and fiftieth penny being abolished—this, again, can have nothing to do with direct taxation on land owing to its smallness. It is possibly applicable to that percentage on sums in litigation which Caligula imposed (Suct., Cal. xl.). The passage from Livy is still more wide of the mark, for it refers to a fraudulent claim on the treasury by certain farmers of the taxes for loss by shipwreck of State stores. It was during the Punic War *when Roman citizens were taxed*, and has no possible relevance as showing that poll tax was universal in provinces which did not then exist. It

will be seen by investigation that none of these passages give the slightest support to Hausrath's statement.

Marquardt's view that the poll tax was only levied by the Romans when they found it already in existence, or the people too rude for more refined methods of taxation, is much more defensible as well as reasonable; it is very doubtful even if what is called by Roman authors "tributum capitum" *always* means "poll tax."

Throughout regions so diverse there would be in progress here and there in settled districts, at dates governed by local convenience, lists for direct taxation purposes which, more or less precise, and at intervals corrected or renewed, would certainly suffice for all practical needs;* yet it is not by isolated registrations alone, but by systematic linking of these (an arduous task), that the population of any of the various countries that composed the Empire could be correctly found, and these registers would no more form part of a universal inscription than the numerous local lists for national, municipal, and ecclesiastical purposes found throughout the England of the last century, with a civilisation incomparably higher, were portions of any comprehensive census scheme even for one small island, for want of which indeed our political economists of the time were reduced to mere guess-work as to the statistics of the population.

* In Sicily (Cicero, *Verres* ii., 56 and 115) there was a census at five-year intervals (*i.e.*, the ordinary lustrum).

Where the levies were on the community, not the individual, lists even local of those liable to direct taxation would be of course quite needless;* indirect taxation such as salt dues, market dues, highway and bridge tolls, import or export duties, &c., do not demand any registration or even counting of the population. Since that time indeed taxation, both direct and indirect, has been carried out freely in all countries without the necessity of a *general* census being discovered.

The absence of direct taxation on the "civis Romanus," whether a dweller in Italy or in the transmarine provinces, and its varied incidence on the different provincials, would render a combination of the registry of both quite motiveless as well as undesirable, owing to the disregard it would show of Roman exclusiveness.

Thus it cannot be conceded that the work which Augustus undeniably performed in remodelling the administration of Italy, and of Rome itself, entitles

* Zumpt (p. 158) brings forward Caligula's mad freak recorded by Dion Cassius (lxix., 22), in which, when in Gaul and short of cash during a dicing bout, he retired, and ordering the census lists to be brought him, commanded the richest men to be executed and their property confiscated, then returning to his boon companions to taunt them that during the short interval he had won an enormous sum while they were trifling with insignificant stakes, and sees in it evidence at least of both land and poll tax in Gaul with individual detail.

But it is obvious that registers that can be looked through so rapidly (even if stored in the palace where the incident is supposed to take place) could not have been voluminous compilations of thousands of names, but merely lists of head men responsible for districts whom he could squeeze.

Of course it in nowise bears on the matter of a *universal* census.

us to infer without the support of evidence that a like care was bestowed upon the provinces and subject kingdoms. In those days the line of separation between the provincial and the citizen was well-nigh as sharply drawn as had been the case between the Spartan and the helot, and Augustus, who, with all his liberality of sentiment, was, we know, deeply opposed to any breaking down of the barrier by a ready admission to the franchise, was not the man to ignore or neutralise it by giving a similar treatment to each.

The organisation and management of the national territory, absorbed as it had been little by little under perfectly unlike conditions after each successful war till it included the whole of Italy, must have been at the beginning of Augustus's rule in a bewildering state of confusion ; while the citizenship, like most political and social institutions that have been built up piecemeal and at haphazard from insignificant beginnings, had become in course of time full of anomalies and complications.

It was, therefore, an urgent matter for the Imperator when things had settled down somewhat to take in hand the unravelling of this tangle, put some order and uniformity into the government of united Italy, and group it into well-considered divisions.

That he historically did this in nowise goes towards showing probability that he decreed a universal or even partial census in the provinces. It might as well be argued that because we may

plan a redistribution of seats in our own Parliament we are therefore likely to make new regulations for Newfoundland or Burmah.

Dr. Ramsay, whose thesis as to periodic enrolments, to be hereafter considered, would be much supported by the successful assertion if not demonstration of the precision of Imperial methods, has the following passage (p. 137) :—“ It is unnecessary to do more than briefly refer to those facts touching the policy and intentions of Augustus which have been skilfully collected and marshalled by a long succession of writers—his general survey of the whole Empire; the *rationes imperii*, a sort of balance sheet published periodically; the *libellus* or *breviarium totius imperii*, a compendium of useful statistics about the kingdoms, the provinces, the allies, &c.

“ These show how carefully and methodically Augustus organised his splendid machinery of government on the basis of accurate, minute, and complete knowledge of everything that concerned the subject people, and make it probable that the system of periodic enrolments which alone rendered a complete statistical account of those peoples possible originated from him, and formed part of his plan of Imperial administration.”

There can hardly be stronger language than this to express the perfection of organisation in a firmly consolidated state; and though one looks in vain throughout the book for any justification of this extreme eulogium on Augustan methods, it will be as well to take some notice of it.

We take the liberty of quoting in this connection from Professor Flinders Petrie, a highly-qualified witness, the following excellent passage:—"It may not be amiss here to point out what is the meaning of *accuracy*. One often hears that something is 'quite accurate.' If I ask a workman if his work is accurate he will indignantly refer to his foot-rule to prove it; but if you were to ask if his foot-rule is accurate he would doubt your sanity. What is accuracy for one purpose is inaccuracy in another. Children build castles on the sand, and make them perhaps tidy enough; but their accuracy would not do for laying out a garden, nor would the garden-bed quite do to regulate the accuracy of a tennis court.

"When a house is planned, still further particularity is needed for the accuracy of its squareness and straightness, and yet the joiner needs a better straight-edge than the bricklayer. In turn, the joiner's ideas would never suffice for the accuracy of putting together a Forth Bridge, with its lengths of furlongs of steel needed to fit exactly into place. And even beyond that, the telescope maker dividing his circles, or polishing his object glasses, must attend to quantities which are quite beyond the accuracies of the engineer.

"There are as many kinds of accuracy as there are of cleanliness, from the cleanliness of a well-swept path up to the absolute lifelessness and chemical purity of some tedious preparation in the laboratory."

We have now to see to which grade of accuracy the Augustan methods may belong.

The instances of methodical administration which are brought forward by Professor Ramsay to show that extreme accuracy was attained are three in number. First, the existence of a geographical and statistical survey of the Empire; second, a document, the *rationarium imperii*; and third, another, the *breviarium imperii*—the two last papers containing abstracts of the Imperial balance-sheets and other details.

The first, a compilation under Agrippa's directions of details respecting the provinces (the *commentarii*), was supplemented by a map or plan of the entire Empire, which he caused to be traced and deposited in the portico attached to the Campus Agrippæ in the capital (Pliny, iii., 2).

The degree of precision of this map must be first tested.

On all the main roads of the Empire the miles had long been measured with inscribed stones at the proper intervals, and route-maps had been made, the distances between stations being indicated.

Such were the “itineraries” which for centuries satisfactorily supplied the needs of an ultra-practical people, having just the position that was held in the world of our grandfathers by that excellent compilation “Paterson's roads.”

In more remote and uncivilised regions the number of hours of march at regulation pace from point to point and from camp to camp were recorded, and plans drawn from them which later afforded a basis for a rough survey; though this was nothing

new, as Alexander had caused to be made similar registrations of distances in his great campaign.

The actual distance in a straight line and on a level between two points, and their relative position, could not be so obtained and, moreover, would be of no consequence whatever in war or commerce.

However, no accurate *map* can be constructed upon such data, for we must in a map locate towns, &c., as fixed points upon a plane surface, in other words by their latitude and longitude.

The latitude of a place, in other words its distance from the pole on a globe, can be found with a fair degree of correctness by observing the relative length of the shadow of a gnomon at midsummer—a fact long known to the Greeks,* and utilised with more or less of accuracy by them in determining the position in latitude of certain important cities, a fairly correct line having been traced from the “sacred cape” (Cape St. Vincent) eastward to Rhodes and beyond, which for centuries afforded a datum line to geographers.

But the determination of the *longitude* of a place, *i.e.*, its actual position on a globe E. or W. of *any* given point, is a very different matter. This demands not only exact instruments for observing the heavenly bodies,† but also (what are even more

* Certainly to the Egyptians more than 2000 years before, and made use of with an incomparably greater degree of accuracy.

† Virtually instantaneous *time signals* over a large distance are now rendered possible by the electric current.

difficult to obtain) either correct time measures—in other words, clocks—or in the alternative, precise tables of the apparent motions of the moon, a celestial timepiece extremely accurate, but terribly difficult to read. Hipparchus says that “the only means we possess of becoming acquainted with the longitudes of different places is afforded by the eclipses of the sun and moon.” In this he had an insight into the proper method, but nothing came of it, for the necessary appliances and observations were wanting, the result being that no place whatever in ancient times had its site defined even approximately by the intersection of lines of latitude and longitude.

It is true there is another method of mapping, *i.e.*, by triangulation, but to apply this to the Roman Empire would be like measuring the British Isles with a foot-rule, even if with their defective appliances the ancients could have obtained to begin with a tolerably accurate base-line.*

It may be dimly imagined what the map must have been that permitted such statements and discussions as to distance and relative position of towns, &c., as are found both in Strabo and Pliny. Even a century and a half later Ptolemy, who in Alexandria had the benefit of a ready reference to the labours of all his predecessors, makes the length of the Mediterranean nearly 900 miles too

* In modern determinations of a base-line *actually measured with a rod*, an error of a quarter inch in the mile would be deemed excessive owing to its tendency to increase in the subsequent operations.

great!* while the distortions in latitude, less excusable, are excessive.

Strabo makes the Pyrenees to run N. and S., though the most ordinary observations would have shown this to be erroneous. The whole of the western basin of the Mediterranean was twisted beyond recognition, more especially the African coast line, owing to fearfully incorrect gnomonic determinations taken on trust from older authorities, no verification being attempted.

It is obvious, therefore, that Agrippa's map could have been little else than a toy, absolutely valueless as a foundation for any land survey, and owing to its glaring defects certainly not the result of one.

If such was the standard map of the period, what precision can be hoped for in the survey of the Empire which is supposed to have accompanied it?

It is impossible to form any complete judgment on what is wholly lost, but there is no doubt that facts considered material to Roman interests would be registered as far as practicable; beyond this we are quite in the dark as to what would be esteemed of sufficient importance to be noted, and it is certain that Agrippa, with all his intelligence, energy, and wide experience, must, as usual in such compilations, especially when they are the first, have been greatly dependent on the reports of others, often unqualified.

* This was due to no fault of his own, he depended on the loose contemporary observations in Arbela and Carthage of the lunar eclipse of B.C. 331, and was thereby misled to the extent of eleven degrees of longitude.

It would seem a very imperfect attempt indeed, even in dealing with the region immediately surrounding Italy, if we may judge by the few tangible allusions to it found in Strabo and Pliny.

In Strabo we find the following passage (v. 2, 7): “The *chorographer* says that the length of this island (Corsica) is 160 miles, its breadth 70, and that the length of Sardinia is 220, and its breadth 98.”

In this instance Strabo gives the distance in miles instead of stadia, which shows that he is quoting from a Roman authority, and it is generally agreed that he is referring to the survey carried out under Agrippa’s orders. If this be so, the passage is a startling instance of inaccuracy, for reduced to English miles the dimensions stand thus: Sardinia as 201 by 90, instead of about 163 by 80, as they should be; and Corsica as 146 by 64, instead of about 120 by 50, an enormous proportion of error for islands close to the Italian coast. Even if he is not using Agrippa’s compilation the possibility of such errors at that date in any authoritative work whatever is sufficiently astonishing, and gives a very bad impression as to the precision of Roman measurements.

Pliny, who from his official position would have had the fullest access to the Imperial records, constantly refers to Agrippa’s work, but apart from measurements, only in trivialities, such as that Agrippa had pronounced a certain Spanish race as of Phœnician extraction; we have also long, dry lists of Italian townships obviously derived from an official compilation: in measurements there is

nothing but confusion, lengths and breadths of irregular areas, such as provinces, being given with or without discussion as to between what points, and whether in a straight line or by roads, the estimate is made. Of course, no such gross uncertainty could occur in an actual survey.*

He gives us (iii., 6) the distance of Africa from Italy on the authority of M. Varro (either incorporated in Agrippa's work or uncorrected by it) as less than 200 Roman miles, *i.e.*, 183 English miles, whereas the shortest line that can be drawn from any point of the Italian coast to Cape Bon is 260 miles! He also gives the distance from Italy to the island of Lissa as fifty Roman = forty-six English miles, the actual measurement being seventy-two miles.

From these few indications, which could be greatly extended, that even long after its publication such enormous blunders could be possible in works of reference, the survey of Agrippa would seem to have been of a very low grade of accuracy indeed.

As to documents 2 and 3. After Augustus's death his will with three codicils was read in the Senate by Drusus on the instructions of Tiberius. The third codicil was found to contain an abstract, drawn up by or for the Imperator, of the state of the Empire, cost of management of the provinces, strength of the forces—military and naval, Roman

* Pliny (iii., 3). "Some writers begin their measurements at one place and some at another, and so proceed in different directions, and hence the result is that no two accounts agree."

and auxiliary, and treasury balances showing taxation yet to be collected ; to this list was appended the names of the freedmen and slaves of his household who kept the several accounts.

This was the "*breviarium imperii*," a summary of ordinary and necessary particulars which no moderately civilised state could be without ; in this instance published by Augustus's desire in handing over to the Senate as representatives of the people uniformly recognised by him as the supreme source of power, the account of his stewardship ; which Tiberius, not too sure of his position, had affected to be unwilling to take up.

Tacitus (Ann. i., 8) and Suetonius (Aug. c., 1) are our authorities for this incident.

But already — in B.C. 23, thirty-seven years previously — Augustus, being in bad health, had expressed a desire to withdraw from his responsible position, and calling together the Senate and magistrates at his own house had handed to C. Piso a statement of the revenue and expenditure of the Empire, in character, no doubt, similar to the later "*breviarium*," though possibly, from its date, in less detail. This was the "*rationarium imperii*," mentioned by Suetonius (Aug. 28), as also by Dion (livi., 30)—in fact the most recent balance-sheet at the time.

In the days of Augustus all that would reach Rome from the provinces would be the net cash product of the imposts, the royalties of mines, &c., plus the contributions in kind and financial and

administrative reports; while the communications from Rome would be but orders for increase, reduction, or change of assessment or advice as to matters of management. The whole machinery of government such as it was would be in the provinces themselves, for to be in close touch with those more remote was impossible, owing to the imperfect means of communication, the central supervision during a term of government being nominal.

Hence there would be in Rome no great *bureaux* like our India office or a French *ministère*, national institutions whence all important details issued and to which all details came, the position of Augustus being rather that of a holder of large and scattered estates, managed by local agents who send from time to time reports and also remittances accompanied by balance-sheets, the bulk of papers being kept on the domains themselves.

The Imperator's privy purse and private assets were indistinguishable from the national revenue and treasure; it had been the custom for foreign kings and native nobles to leave him large legacies, the greater part of which he expressly states in his will had been expended along with his two paternal inheritances in the service of the State.*

* It is true that Augustus appointed in B.C. 23 two "prætores ærarii," but they would be simply treasurers, perhaps auditors—accountants, not administrators—and had to honour the Imperator's draft without question. Tacitus (Ann. iv., 2) in mentioning a decree of the senate that the effects of Sejanus should be taken from the public treasury and placed in that of Tiberius, drily adds "as if it made any difference!"

To speak of either of these short documents, embodying only the most ordinary information, as evidence of the existence of a "splendid" system of government, with "accurate, minute, and complete knowledge of everything that concerned the subject people," is surely unreasonable.

As to the facts "skilfully collected and marshalled by a long succession of writers," no names or statements being appended, it may be commented that for this period our sources of information are few in number and often fragmentary; that they have been minutely examined over and over again, and that nearly all that can be extracted from them even by the most acute analysis and collation has been already effected, the possible extra information from chance inscriptions that may be yet exhumed being small indeed,* the result being that we cannot find that any elaborate details as to the provincials were ever reported to Rome, the exigencies of military service and the incidence of taxation being, as might have been expected, alone dealt with.

Such incidents as the progresses of Agrippa through the provinces in which wrongs might be redressed, and the later despatch of Germanicus to the East to inquire into the causes of disaffection, were isolated measures taken, in no way a part of any system of government.

* Dr. Ramsay himself states (p. 166): "Evidence about the details of the Augustan system of provincial administration had almost completely perished, until inscriptions began to reveal a few isolated facts (!)."

Yet though there is little probability that the welfare of the provincial, apart from his protection as a producer of wealth, would be a subject of solicitude at Rome, there remains the suggestion that a purely scientific interest may have brought about a careful registration of facts relating, for instance, to the social condition, customs, laws, &c., of the vassal nationalities ; it will be as well to examine this.

Strabo (iii., 4, 19), remarks, "Though the Roman historians imitate the Greeks they fall far short of them. What they relate (as to observations of different countries) is taken from the Greeks, very little being the result of their own ardour in acquiring information. So that whenever anything has been omitted by the former there is not much supplied by the latter."

The justice of this criticism is fully borne out by what remains to us of the Roman writings. The "Germania" of Tacitus may seem an exception, but that treatise is merely a compilation.

With a superfluity of temples, baths, amphitheatres, and circuses, all the appliances of pleasure, luxury, and superstition, not only in the capital itself but throughout Italy, it is a grievous fact that in spite of their enormous wealth, the spoil of the ancient world, and their unlimited power, the Romans built no home of science, no national college and library on the lines of the Museum of Alexandria, with which, more than 250 years before, the enlightened enterprise of a comparatively insignificant state had endowed mankind.

We have already seen that there was no attempt in either scientific geography or geodesy, or in the astronomy with which these are linked, to push further the researches of the Greeks or even to verify their conclusions; such studies, if ever thought of, were estimated as mechanical and beneath the dignity of Roman patricians, and as suitable alone for Greeks or freedmen; rhetoric, and the more exalted speculations respecting cosmogony and the nature of the gods being more appropriate to their own quality. It is impossible to read the "Academica" of Cicero, intended by the author as a graceful reflex of the highest form of the intellectual life of the educated Roman of the period, without observing that in this phase of culture, science, even the most elementary, has no place; words, not things, are the objects of study, while even in this an easy dilettantism of the Horace Walpole type is the correct *pose* for the educated man, though he can be keen enough when his own material interests are concerned.

Not a single discovery or invention valuable to the human race can be attributed to Rome during the period in which it wielded the resources of the world, and had the freest access to all its stored-up learning.* Aristotle's teachings were out of fashion;

* The Romans, in spite of their unlimited power, have no such record of valuable gifts to posterity as have the Arabs, when, enjoying a short respite from the iron rule of the Koran and dogma, they had possessed themselves of what fragments remained of the knowledge of the Greeks, the whole of which had been at Rome's command. The Roman system of arithmetical notation was barbarous to a degree, far

even in the home of the school we find that Philo Judæus, *an Alexandrian born* with every social advantage, is destitute of any trace of the scientific spirit.

Of course it would be untrue to say that no Roman of this age rose above the level of the crowd. There were now and again men of high intelligence, such as Julius Cæsar or Marcus Varro, and honest, painstaking collectors of facts as well as fictions of the type of Pliny, while even modern thought is singularly foreshadowed by Lucretius; but such as these were exceptions, they could not leaven the dull mass nor influence its prejudice and ignorance.*

In art, too, it was just the same in spite of their pretensions as connoisseurs; the inimitable treasures in marble and bronze, the plunder of Greece that since the time of Mummius had more and more

below that of the Greeks; the Arabs brought the priceless knowledge of our present ciphers from India, and developed algebra. The Romans had no thought for astronomy, or comprehension of it; the Arabs from Samarcand to Cordova deeply studied it, constructing important instruments, and making and recording observations, some of which are so accurate as to be of use to the moderns. The science of medicine was in Rome in so primitive a condition that Hausrath's caustic comment, when reviewing the interminable lists of loathsome and ridiculous remedies registered in Pliny, that in those days the exorcist was decidedly to be preferred to the physician, is fully justified. The true basis of this science, and of the kindred chemistry (the latter non-existent at Rome), was built up by Jews and Arabs through experiment and observation, many of the chemical substances still retaining the names then given to them. The literary progress of the Arab race, equally striking, is not here dwelt on.

* Pliny plainly confesses that he is an exception, and is caustic on the subject of the indifference of his countrymen to natural sciences and their greed (N. H. xiv., 1).

crowded their temples, porticoes, baths, and public places, as well as the innumerable villas of the wealthy—masterpieces the few scattered fragments of which, spared by time and barbarism, excite our strongest wonder and delight—brought to that race no lesson, the degradation of taste continuing unchecked from year to year.

As for the mass of the people themselves, their own writers bluntly confess that they were debased and demoralised by the abominable but firmly rooted system of dole and amusement, the "*panem et circenses*" of Juvenal, disposing of their suffrages to the best advantage and caring for nothing but the pleasures of the moment.

The inference, therefore, of Dr. Ramsay that the Augustan methods were so complete, systematic, and accurate as to render quite probable the further vast step of a universal enrolment has little to support it; on the contrary, it is fairly evident that the Romans had neither the will, the knowledge, nor the appliances requisite for investigations other than belonging to Professor Petrie's lowest grade of *accuracy*.

When we think of the myriads of illiterates, nomads, and half-civilised scattered throughout unsurveyed regions, whose barbarous names (if they possessed them) would otherwise have to be filled in by the enumerators themselves, a simple counting of heads would be the only operation conceivable of universal application, provided even on this limited supposition that the waggon-dwellers of the north,

the wandering tribes of Numidia, and the tent people of the Nabatæan kingdom (equally with Palestine under Rome) would keep still for the ceremony.

And the scheme, even in that least complex form demanding an enormous army of trained officials, would no more serve the interests of the State, fiscal or military, in dealing with races having no interests or customs in common and incapable of joint action, than it would benefit our own government to ascertain the exact number of Indians and Burmans, of Zulus of Natal, of negroes of Jamaica, &c., &c., on the self-same day as that on which our home decennial census is taken.

Besides, after all, in this operation we have no analogy with that enrolment in Palestine recorded by Luke, where Jews were forced to make journeys to their "own cities," where we are told women even were recorded by name, and the birth of a child so accurately registered as to be easily traced by natives of far-off countries 200 years afterwards.

It is quite true that Luke does not expressly say that this universal census was carried out, except in Palestine, but merely that it was decreed and the principle enunciated, and this view some writers—aware of the dangers ahead—have advocated.* But, not to dwell upon the ridicule attaching to Augustus's position, in making a *public edict* of absolute futility, it may be stated positively that the

* "What Augustus did was to lay down the principle of systematic 'enrolment' in the Roman world, not to arrange for the taking of a single census" (Ramsay, p. 124).

mere “principle” of systematic universal enrolments must have been, if entertained, but a good resolve, a State policy, a suggestion for the future only when put in practice to be embodied in an edict, and if at any time carried out, as the Senate governed all the more settled provinces, a decree of that body would have been necessary, of which most important decision there is no trace in Tacitus, Suetonius, or Dion.

It may be finally pointed out that had any universal counting, however imperfect, taken place in the days of Augustus, it is perfectly impossible that we should have been without *some* reference to it, even if indirect, in writers of that epoch, whereas none whatever is extant, and, graver symptom still, not a word reaches us as to the extent of the population in any of these varied countries, or even of Italy and Rome* itself, which in that case would be approximately known. On the contrary, the uniform silence on this point when the information could be usefully inserted justifies us in saying that the writers were in absolute ignorance of such details.

Strabo (v., 1, 7) incidentally mentions Patavium (Padua) as the finest city in its district, adding, “at the time of the last census it was said to contain 500 *equites*.”

Now the *last* census to Strabo would be that of A.D. 14, and it will be noted that the statistical fact

* Owing to this, the wildest guesses have been indulged in as to the population of the Augustan Rome. It is obvious that citizens and inhabitants of Rome do not mean the same thing.

he refers to applies only to Italy and to "cives Romani," who, it will be shown (p. 168), were then carefully registered.

Again, speaking of the Belgæ, he says "The amount of their population may be estimated by the fact that formerly there were said to be 300,000 Belgæ capable of bearing arms," therein making use of an old statement of Cæsar's. There could be no knowledge of any recent compilation which would supersede this antiquated and rough estimate.

We have in the geography of Pliny, while he is describing a region most remote and hardly civilised, forming the N.W. corner of Spain, the sole instance of detail of population given throughout his survey of the vast Roman world. It is as follows :—

The twenty-two tribes of the Astures numbered in free population...	...	240,000
The district of Lucus, "but little known"		166,000
The region of the Brocari	175,000*

Now Pliny, who had governed in Spain, had access to all Imperial documents. At his date, assuming the fact of a universal census under Augustus, he could have given particulars of population. Yet he had just before spoken of the populous, rich, and long civilised, almost Roman Boetica, which he must have been well acquainted

* The local chiefs had probably made a rough return of their tribal numbers for some personal tax, which Pliny, when an official in Spain, had in his possession.

We know that three legions had been brought into that district, and a levy would be the inevitable result.

with, but not a word escapes him as to the number of the people; we have only generalities such as “a vast number of people dwell along the Guadaluiver.”

Again, it is a curious fact that the only real attempt at estimation of population to be found in the works of Josephus, who in Rome, under Imperial patronage, would have no difficulty in consulting state documents for his history, is of *Egypt*, where we know methodical registers had long been kept: he says (in the speech which he constructs for Herod Agrippa) “Egypt has 7,500,000 men, besides the population of Alexandria, as may be learned from the revenue of the poll-tax.”

Two things are evident here—first, that Alexandria was, as we might expect, under a different régime from the remainder of the country, and that therefore there was no uniformity of system—second, that as Josephus subsequently merely compares the *monetary* value of the two countries in weighing Egypt against Palestine, though his argument is based on the *numbers* controlled by Rome, the Jewish country could have supplied no data for a correct enumeration of population, and there was no poll-tax.

The counting of the citizens of the Apamean district of Syria was thought of such exceptional interest as to be inscribed on the tombstone of Q. *Æmilius Secundus*, as carried into effect by him, when a legionary officer of engineers under P. S. *Quirinius* (see p. 171).

We can, therefore, hardly deem this operation to be merely an incident in a process that was automatically going on every few years in tens of thousands of communities throughout the world.

Besides, it happens to be a detail of a known and easily explained local though important census, resulting from the reorganisation of Syria and the annexation of Judæa.

Also, it would be difficult to name a more thoroughly civilised district than this of Apamea, a member of the famed Syrian Tetrapolis, only inferior in importance to Antioch itself, hence the enumeration could be easily and accurately carried out.

It may now be said that the historic Augustus, cool, patient, tactful, cautious in avoiding collision with prejudice or recognised authority, yet leading Senate and people by almost imperceptible gradations along the incline to slavery, who looked to the future, and earnestly to his "gens" till strange fatalities extinguished the direct line for a fruition of his schemes of organisation, would not be likely to take such a premature determination as to enforce a world-wide census, inexpedient even if practicable.

The narrative in the third Gospel (written at the earliest under the Flavians) would appeal to people who had been accustomed to childish or reckless edicts such as some of those of Caligula and Nero, and who would therefore see nothing incredible or even extraordinary in such a decree of Augustus.

If only the commentators who see no difficulties

here would descend to particulars! The present writer does not believe that any advocate of the possibility of such a universal numbering has ever taken the trouble to realise the gigantic, overwhelming, as well as useless task it implies; if he *has* thought it out, he has never, as far as can be traced, put his explanation of the puzzle before the world.

Yet in Dr. Ramsay's book (p. 102) we find a severe reproof administered to Gardthausen, the historian of Augustus, for expressing an opinion on this subject, the passage being as follows: "It is declared to be a demonstrated fact that Augustus never ordered any general 'enrolment' or census to be made of the whole Roman world. Gardthausen, the latest historian of Augustus, speaks most emphatically on this point. He goes even so far as to declare that it is inconsistent with Augustus's aims to attribute to him any such intention; he quotes the words of Luke, and then adds that for the Emperor's plans a general census of the Empire was neither necessary nor suitable. The eminent German scholar here displays a familiarity with Augustus's intentions and the limits of his aims which is quite unjustified by the scanty evidence accessible to us. Such assumption of the right to pronounce negative judgments is not the spirit in which the history of Augustus ought to be written; and such a wild statement as this shows a momentary loss of the historic instinct which enables a writer to distinguish between legitimate inference and loose imagination. It is one of the places in Gardthausen's work where

a regret rises strong in every reader's mind that Mommsen has never found opportunity to write the history of that period."

On this passage it may be observed—first, that it has *not* been declared to be a "demonstrated fact" by any one qualified to speak that Augustus never ordered a universal enrolment; it would be Quixotic in these days to attempt proof of such a negative; it is only contended (as is surely sufficient) that it is grossly improbable, with not a shred of evidence in its favour, save the passage in the third gospel which is under debate, and entangled with difficulties on all sides which, it is charged, are ignored, not met, by its supporters. Second, that owing to the continued sequence of State terrorism, from the death of Augustus to the accession of Vespasian, we have little material for authentic history after the time of Julius Cæsar. Under Tiberius and his successors, any words of praise of Augustus would have been fixed upon by the *delators* as a veiled or oblique censure on the Emperor of the day.* When at last it was safe to write, the times of Augustus had become ancient history, and the barest annals and compilations were deemed sufficient.

* As to the peril of historical writers after Augustus's days, see Tacitus (Ann. iv., 34, 35) and Suetonius (Tib. lxi.). We have also some indication of it in the following extract, from a letter of Pliny the younger, who, speaking of his uncle, says—"In the latter years of Nero's reign he wrote eight books 'On difficulties in the Latin language'; that being a period at which every kind of study, in any way free-spoken or even of elevated style, would have been rendered dangerous by the tyranny that was exercised."

Thus we are more or less compelled to judge from the comparatively few recorded acts and words of Augustus, and beyond these to depend upon inference and analogy as to the probability or improbability of schemes or deeds attributed to him, and surely we have a right to say that the "aims" of a man so astute as he were governed by considerations of common-sense and the careful estimate of utility and practicability, the plan of a simultaneous universal census never having been shown to possess either recommendation.

It is also a singular circumstance that Mommsen, to whom Dr. Ramsay refers, instituting needlessly an invidious comparison, is a conspicuous example of the historian who, having conscientiously studied a subject, has formed most decided opinions, taking no pains to suppress or qualify them, and who certainly does not unduly cumber the pages of his history by noting the passages of the authorities from which those opinions are built up.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUKE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED (RECORDED CENSUS ENUMERATIONS).

LUSTRAL AND PROVINCIAL CENSUS—DR. RAMSAY'S CENSUS.

THOUGH what was called the “census” can be traced far back in the history of Rome as a national institution, invested with religious sanction and with special officials for its service, its application was for ages confined to a comparatively small and privileged class, the *Cives Romani*. Each head of a family, being nominally a citizen of Rome itself, had to make a return every five years, this period being named (from a ceremony which marked its completion) the “*lustrum*,” as to age, grade of citizenship, number of family and slaves, and nature and extent of property; and as a result of the jealousy with which the valuable and constantly increasing rights of the citizens were guarded an exclusiveness common to all privileged communities and favoured guilds) this declaration had to be made in the capital itself.

The Latin allies, who had so often helped Rome to victory, were for a long time most mercilessly

exploited as to levies, while all political equality was denied them, at one period indeed those resident in the city being expelled. After quite two centuries of provocation this selfish policy produced (in B.C. 90) the so-called "social war," at the outbreak of which these non-citizens greatly outnumbered the people with full Roman rights, though they were unfitted to make a general stand owing to a complex graduation of privileges for those outside the pale which had bred disunion among their communities.

After the first year of the uprising had proved unfavourable to Rome, the franchise with slight reservations was given to all allied Italian communities, also to all those who would make application before a Roman magistrate, north Italy (Cisalpine Gaul) having, however, the more limited "Latin rights" granted, that district being still distinctly Celtic.

Sulla enforced the equality of rights of the old Roman burgess and the new Italian citizen, and he gave towns and lands in Italy taken from the opposition to his soldiers as colonies with the franchise, hoping thus to break up the large estates which were depopulating the country, as well as to encourage and spread his adherents.

From the time of the conquest of Macedonia (B.C. 168) the wealth that had been poured into Rome relieved the Italian citizen henceforth from direct contributions, import duties, principally on luxuries, alone remaining, and the census, being no longer the necessary basis for taxation, ceased to be

regularly held,* and probably did not include details of property.

During the confusion of the civil wars the Latin franchise had been distributed broadcast to useful allies, those in that part of *geographical* Italy called "*Gallia Transpadana*" receiving it from Cæsar, who also planted important colonies with these rights in outlying lands.†

The compulsory visit to Rome for the exercise of the franchise was in time dispensed with, a genuine household enrolment made at the dwelling-place or the nearest local centre being introduced both for voting and census purposes.

Concerning this important change Suetonius tells us (Aug. xlvi.) "Augustus augmented the population of Italy by planting no less than twenty-eight colonies." "In rights and privileges he rendered them in a measure equal to the city itself by bringing in a new form of suffrage, which the principal officers and magistrates of the colonies might take at home and forward under seal to the city before the elections."

Augustus strongly discouraged any addition to the number of citizens, warning Tiberius to follow the same policy, though "to those cities that could produce instances of having deserved well of the Roman people he presented the freedom of Latium

* Augustus states that his first census was carried out after an intermission of forty-two years.

† Suetonius (Cæs. xlvi.) says, "80,000 citizens having been distributed into foreign colonies."

or even of the city." * Their enumeration was three times effected by him during his long reign, and he claims special credit for these undertakings, knowing as he did that these men were at that date still the back-bone of the army, and when planted in isolated colonies among a subject population were the trusty guardians of the interests of the State.

Later Emperors continually extended the franchise, Caligula being free with the gift, and as the privilege became more widely distributed the necessity for a lustral census became less and less (we find no trace of one beyond Vespasian), till finally under Caracalla the last barriers were broken down.

We have now to find the actual dates of recorded Roman enumerations or assessments of any sort, observe their character, and note whether they appear to have been local or universal according to our authorities.

The very prevalent system among the Romans of dating events from a legendary epoch—that of the founding of their city (A.U.C.)—would, as the figures therefrom are continuous, be the best and simplest to employ here, were it not that it does not accord with the modern method of reckoning from a year assumed as that of the nativity, which is so general that it cannot be displaced; though possessing the cumbrous peculiarity that, as is acutely felt in this investigation which deals with the point of junction, descending and ascending series of years are con-

* Suetonius (Aug. xlviij.).

stantly in use, *e.g.*, we have to say B.C. 6 and A.D. 7 in naming dates twelve years asunder, which could be far more neatly recorded as A.U.C. 748 and 760.

A “census,” as the word is ordinarily used by Roman writers (apart from the national completed lustrum which is always clearly distinguished), was an assessment or levy in any form upon a single community, or a group of such, with or without the collection of it; it does not necessarily imply that individual names were inscribed, *e.g.* (Tac., *Ann.* i., 31), Germanicus is, at the time of the death of Augustus, occupied in making a census of the Gauls, but immediately afterwards, we have the words—“Germanicus thus receiving, *as I have said*, the tribute in Gaul”; thus making the census and the taxation levy mean the same thing.

By Cæsar (*Gallic War*, i., 29) the word census is used simply to describe a rough counting of the Helvetii after their defeat—nothing more.

Thus caution is requisite in judging of the process meant when a census is vaguely alluded to by Roman writers.

During his reign Augustus carried through three enumerations of *Roman citizens*, concerning which he himself records:—“In my fifth consulate, by command of the people and Senate, I increased the number of the patricians; thrice I convoked the Senate, and held in my sixth consulate a census of the people, with M. Agrippa as my colleague, completing a lustrum after forty-two years, in which

lustrum the Roman citizens were counted as 4,063,000 in number.

“ Again, a second time, by consular direction, I by myself completed the lustrum, C. Censorinus and C. Asinius being consuls, in which lustrum were enumerated 4,233,000 Roman citizens. A third time, by consular direction, with my son, Tiberius Cæsar, as colleague, I completed the lustrum, in which were counted 4,937,000 Roman citizens.”

This is corroborated by Suetonius, who says (Aug. xxvii.), “ He (Augustus) thrice took a census of the people; the first and third time with a colleague, but the second by himself.”

The dates and occasions of the foregoing are now given :—

B.C. 28. Celebration of a first lustrum of power, and taking of a census.

B.C. 8. Acceptance of power for another ten years, and taking of a census.

A.D. 13, 14. Acceptance of power for another ten years, and taking of a census.

Even putting aside the argument from the absolute silence of history and the evidence from the Imperator’s own inscription, we may say that it was impossible that these recorded countings were extended to the provincials of the entire Empire, as they were far too rapidly carried through for this.

Enumeration of *cives Romani* was easy; military colonies of veterans were concentrated not scattered

settlements, entire legions being sometimes transplanted along with their tribunes and centurions (see Tac., Ann. xiv., 27), and apart from this officially conducted emigration Roman citizens were not colonists in the modern sense of the word, save perhaps in Gallia Narbonensis. There were no details of property *then* necessary, as there was no direct taxation, and all eligible would be sure to claim registration promptly.

In the case of the first census, that of B.C. 28, on the model of which the two subsequent ones were made, less than a year sufficed for the work, for Augustus had returned to Rome from Asia Minor after his settlement of Egyptian affairs in the autumn of B.C. 29, then taking in hand the regulation of the patrician list and carrying out the census, which we know incidentally from Dion (liii., 1) was completed before the consecration of the Palatine temple of Apollo in the autumn of the next year.

We find no apparent difference in the conduct of the second and assertedly similar one of B.C. 8. The last also (of A.D. 14), possibly begun in the previous year, was *certainly* finished some time before the Imperator's death in August of A.D. 14. (Suet., Tib. xxi).

Besides these national registrations we have during Augustus's reign mention of a census in Gaul, controlled by himself in B.C. 27, another held there by Drusus in B.C. 10, and one by Germanicus commenced in A.D. 14. These would be but local assessments on districts or communities if we credit

Tacitus; there is no trace on these three dates of enrolments elsewhere.

We now come to the census of A.D. 7, relating to Syria and part of Palestine, which is referred to by Josephus in the three following passages:—

“And now Archelaus’s part of Judæa was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as procurator, having the power of life and death put into his hand by Cæsar” (*Wars* ii., 8, 1).

In his later work, “The Antiquities,” Josephus gives fuller details, viz.:—

“Archelaus’s country was annexed to the province of Syria; and Quirinius, one that had been consul, was sent by Cæsar to take account of people’s effects in Syria and to sell the property of Archelaus” (*Ant.* xvii., 13, 5). Also

“Quirinius, a Roman senator, and one who had held other magistracies and had passed through them till he had been consul, and one who on other accounts was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria with a few others, being sent by Cæsar to be governor of that nation and to take account of their substance; Coponius also, a man of the equestrian order, was sent together with him to have the supreme power over the Jews.

“Moreover, Quirinius came himself into Judæa, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance and to dispose of Archelaus’s possessions; the Jews, though at the outset taking the report of taxation heinously,

ceasing further opposition to it through the influence of Joazar, a high priest; so that they gave an account of their estates without dispute" (Ant. xviii., 1, 1).

In the foregoing passages Josephus records that on the deposition of Herod's son, Archelaus, the Ethnarch of Judæa and Samaria in A.D. 6, Augustus for the first time took those districts into his own hands, annexing them to Syria; that P. Sulpicius Quirinius was appointed governor of the reconstituted and augmented province, with Coponius as his subordinate procurator of Judæa, and that a census of the entire province was then effected, both of population and property.

These statements of Josephus are corroborated by monumental evidence, a tomb-inscription, of which at first a portion only was found and rather hastily condemned as spurious by Zumpt* and others, but of which the remaining half has since come to light, proving its authenticity. It is of a legionary officer, Q. Æmilius Secundus, for whom is claimed in it the honour of acting as enumerator under Quirinius's orders in a census for the district of Apamea, near to the Syrian capital, Antioch. He states that he found the number of citizens to be 117,000.†

* "Es ist ein wunderliches Machwerk, das nur bei denen welche der Lateinischen Inschriften unkundig waren Glauben finden konnte," is the amusing comment of Zumpt (p. 72) on the specimen of Augustan Latinity revealed by the first half of the stone.

† There is no record anywhere nor any probability that this census, due to local causes, was merely part of a process going on throughout the Empire. (See the comment on Secundus's inscription, p. 158.)

The next census is one imposed upon a Cilician mountain tribe in A.D. 36. Tacitus is our authority, the passage being (Ann. vi., 41): "About the same time the tribe* of the Clitæ (see p. 111) subject to Archelaus of Cappadocia, because they were compelled to submit to a census in our mode so as to pay tribute, retreated among the crests of the Taurus range, and from the nature of these positions maintained themselves against the unwarlike troops of the king"; and he adds that M. Trebellius, sent by Vitellius, the president of Syria, with 4000 legionary soldiers and some chosen auxiliaries, compelled their surrender.

But this explicit statement of the historian has been disputed as incredible; a King Archelaus—the same already referred to as the father of Glaphyra, Herod's son's wife (p. 45)—having been dispossessed by Tiberius about eighteen years before, dying at Rome shortly afterwards, Cappadocia being then reduced into a province (Tac., Ann. ii., 42 and 56). How, then, could there be a king in A.D. 35, when the monarchy was done away with in A.D. 17?

The argument that because Roman troops were called in the district must have been included in a province has no weight. Had Herod the Great, for instance, been unable to subdue an insurrection, he would have had the help of Roman troops; the claim for aid being reciprocal. In A.D. 53, a Roman

* Tacitus says "Clitarum *natio*," but that word had not necessarily the extended meaning we now give to it. In a later passage the Clitæ are called a tribe or clan.

detachment was sent from Syria to Anemurium, a town in this self-same district of Cilicia Tracheia, then belonging to Antiochus of Commagene, but it did not imply his deposition.

However, upon this point Zumpt formulates three arguments to demonstrate that Tacitus is in error, the text of which may be translated as follows (Zumpt, p. 182): "In the first place, we only know of a daughter of Archelaus married to Herod's son Alexander; a son or other descendants would, owing to the close connection between the Cappadocian and Jewish royal families, have been in some manner chronicled. Secondly—When the actual kingdom was absorbed, the title of king, which Tacitus gives to the assumed younger Archelaus, disappeared with it; so it happened in Herod's family. Thirdly—The Clitæ appear to be, in A.D. 53, without a king."

On these criticisms we may comment:—

First. Because Josephus, a historian of Jewish matters, does not mention any family of Archelaus except Glaphyra (she being necessarily alluded to as one of those whose contests for supremacy disturbed the court of Herod), Zumpt infers that there could hardly be a son, a nephew, or a grand-nephew who could succeed him.

This reasoning is not very conclusive, for it is only by chance that we know anything of Glaphyra's mother (and that not to her credit), Josephus not being concerned in narrating details of Cappadocian history, and of a king who was not even a Cappadocian. He leaves, for instance, in most

complete obscurity the reasons for the succession of Eneas, *alias* Aretas, to Obodas on the throne of Arabia, though this was a neighbouring state, and closely entangled in its history at that date with Herod's affairs.

Second. As to the disappearance of the Cappadocian kingdom.

There was no regularity in Roman methods respecting the absorption or rearrangement of kingdoms. If we look to the case of Palestine, to which Zumpt rather imprudently appeals, the royal title was granted to Herod. It was denied his son ; portions of his realm (Judæa and Samaria) were annexed to the Syrian province.* They were afterwards given back to Herod Agrippa along with the kingly title, and the process of restoration of the old monarchy was going on till chance in the early years of Nero turned the Imperial policy in another direction.

We know also that Caligula gave back in A.D. 38, the small realm of Commagene which had twenty years before been absorbed after the death of its king, Antiochus (Tac., Ann. ii., 56), to his son, also named Antiochus, who later is found in possession as well of, at all events a part of, the coast of Cilicia Tracheia, and before this Juba,

* On the death, without male issue, of Herod's son Philip, who was tetrarch of Trachonitis, Gaulonitis, and Batanea, Tiberius joined his tetrarchy to the province of Syria ; but he gave orders that its revenue should be put aside in the district itself, the inference being plain that he did not deem the arrangement a final one (Josephus, Ant. xviii., 4, 6).

son of a King of Numidia then absorbed as a province, had been appointed King of Mauritania, the kingly title being resumed in other cases by Imperial sanction, as Zumpt must well have known.

It is probable that there were often excellent reasons for these apparent reversals or vacillations as to policy of which we are now ignorant: the existence of little buffer states would often obviate the necessity of a direct warfare with troublesome semi-barbarous tribes on the further borders, campaigns which once begun *must* from regard to the dignity of Rome be carried through, however valueless the prize.

Third. It is difficult to comprehend how Zumpt can have assumed these Clitæ to be without a king in A.D. 53, when Tacitus (Ann. xii., 55) expressly says that Antiochus of Commagene *restored* them to obedience.

Had this operation, a census in accordance with Roman methods attempted to be carried out by a subject king, been a portion merely of a universal enrolment sweeping not only all provincials but all such tributary states into its meshes, Tacitus could hardly have avoided some reference to it, however indirect, as the cause of the difficulty--yet he gives most unequivocally the incident as an isolated one.

The next census we know of is one held by Claudius in A.D. 48*; this, like those of Augustus, was

* "He (Claudius) then completed the lustrum, on which occasion the census of the citizens was 5,984,072" (Tac. Ann., xi. 25).

of Roman citizens—the *lustrum conditum*. There is no trace whatever of any registrations of other peoples.

Another mentioned in history is of the Gauls in A.D. 61, of which Tacitus says “a general levy was made throughout both the Gauls.” It certainly was not part of a world-wide operation.

Finally, Vespasian held a *lustrum conditum* in A.D. 74 (Pliny, N. H. vii. 49). There is no evidence of universal counting at this date.

The result of this rapid survey is that we nowhere obtain from history any support to the view that a universal census was ever carried out.

By the aid of these details of dates of recorded census operations, it is now possible to discuss Professor Ramsay's thesis, which is briefly as follows.

First. That Jesus was born (rather earlier than the generally accepted date) between B.C. 8 and B.C. 6, at the time of a census then made throughout Palestine by order of Augustus, but carried out by Herod.

Second. That this census was the first of a cycle unmentioned in history, but designed by Augustus to be effected throughout the entire Empire—proof being afforded of its repeated application to *Egypt* at regular intervals of fourteen years through the papyri recently exhumed in that country.

Third. That there is distinct evidence in the dates of the recorded Roman registrations that this cycle was afterwards generally followed in the other provinces and in Italy itself, though with some

exceptions, due probably to the stress of political difficulties.

With regard to the shifting of the ordinarily recognised date of the nativity to one, two, or three years earlier no fair objection can be made. As Clinton (Fas., Rom. ii., 227) says, "It is shown from Augustine that no evidence remained to fix the year of the nativity." "The early fathers knew nothing upon this subject beyond what was contained in the Scriptures which we now possess."

We, therefore, find an immense variety of opinions among them as to the particular year, all equally valueless, as their conclusions are drawn from hopelessly uncertain data, or are mere deductions from the Gospel accounts, the plain fact being that nothing whatever is known of the actual date, locality, or incidents of the nativity save from the two records of Matthew and Luke.

Egypt had possessed in the days of Augustus, for more than thirty centuries at the very lowest estimate, an accurate system of land survey and also detailed records respecting taxation and liabilities to the State. The wonderful Twelfth Dynasty papyri of Kahun abundantly prove it, and although it must be admitted that in that country eras of high civilisation were more than once followed by periods of relative barbarism, like our "dark ages," when alien races gained the upper hand and ruled the land, yet these refinements had not entirely lost their vitality, and were again in operation when the incubus was withdrawn.

The Ptolemies took to this almost immemorial organisation, nor is there anything to show that Augustus did otherwise when he succeeded to their inheritance.

The system of Roman administration in Egypt after its absorption in B.C. 30, was, so far as extant writings throw light upon it, of quite exceptional character when compared with that of any other province, the country being in fact treated in great measure as a large and highly profitable landed estate, belonging personally to the Imperator and managed by his resident steward, of whom it was more required that he should be a clear-headed financier and methodical organiser than a skilful soldier or astute diplomatist.

This official, therefore, contrary to the invariable practice with respect to the other provinces, was merely of that equestrian order from whose ranks were taken the lesser officials, through whom the revenue passed and by whom military and civil service pay was distributed, and who therefore had experience in the monetary and commercial matters from which the higher rank was formally excluded.

This arrangement also rendered far less likely any dangerous understanding between the rulers of Egypt and the consular and *prætorian* dignitaries who governed the province of Syria so close to its borders, and the station of so many legions.

Egypt already, as we have seen, enjoying this ancient indigenous civilisation enlarged in its scope by Greek genius, the scheme of government put in

practice seems to have been adapted from already working Ptolemaic forms and not from imported Roman ones.

The prefect, the direct representative of the Imperator, was assisted by a vice-president, whose title was a survival from Ptolemaic times. Under these were the officials responsible for upper, middle, and lower Egypt respectively, but the true territorial base of the system was the *nome*, a national division going back to remote ages; these nomes were about forty in number, the country being parcelled out between them, the governor of each being the *strategus*, who was the authority in matters of local census and taxation, acting besides as magistrate in his district.

Under Roman rule, every fourteen years the Egyptian householder, according to his nome, had to give to the *strategus* a return of all under his roof, with their ages, *but no other detail*. At intervals this return was revised by reports of births, deaths, removals, &c., as a basis for taxation until superseded by the next cyclical enumeration.

It is the contention by Professor Ramsay that this cycle of fourteen years was introduced throughout the Empire by Augustus that has now to be considered, as its general agreement with the dates of recorded Roman inscriptions is alleged; so that though the cycle might not in case of unusual stress of circumstance be always rigidly adhered to, it may be distinctly traced as an underlying principle from the time of its inception to, at any rate, that of

Vespasian ; any census held in Palestine in B.C. 8-6, a date fairly close to one of the intervals on this system, making the occurrence of the nativity during such an enumeration in the lifetime of Herod fairly credible if not demonstrable, thus sheltering the accuracy of Luke.

The dates for the census computation, according to Professor Ramsay's system, would be B.C. 9, A.D. 6, 20, 34, 48, 62, 76, &c., and he correctly adds (p. 132) "a census paper, dated in the end of the year A.D. 90-91, contains a statement of the facts required for the enrolment of 89-90, and so on."

We must first remark that if Augustus wanted a precise cycle for universal use, which is more than problematical, the multiples of the ancient national lustrum of five years, invested with religious sanction, weighted with patriotic prejudice, and according to which for centuries taxation had been adjusted, were ready to his hand, and we fail to see any practical advantage (nor is any shown) in deliberately substituting an exotic period of fourteen years not simply commensurable for the obvious and easily adopted Latin one of fifteen years—*i.e.*, three lustral units.

A few words must now be said on the subject of the recent Egyptian Græco-Roman explorations and finds, as our knowledge of the system of enrolment adopted there is derived from them.

At Dimeh and other places in the Fayoum, as also in Middle Egypt, have been discovered in the rubbish-heaps, near the sites of ancient towns and

in tombs, manuscripts in papyrus, more or less imperfect.

The finest Greek rolls have been found in their owner's tombs. Mummy cases of Ptolemaic dates were often made up of old papyri (just as, more than a generation ago, the trunkmaker absorbed literary productions), these forming another source of supply, the bulk of papers having, however, been unearthed from the rubbish-heaps.

Those belonging to Oxyrhynchus, in Middle Egypt, a nome capital of importance in ancient days, later (in the fourth and fifth centuries) famous for its churches and monasteries, but now a waste, have supplied an enormous mass of papers, which at present have been only imperfectly looked through; one volume of a most interesting character, giving selections from the documents found, having, however, been already published with careful translations, by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, of Oxford, the actual explorers.*

These papyri, ranging over seven centuries in their dates, are indescribably mixed in their distribution in the heap, for early first century papers may be found close to the surface, and Byzantine several feet lower, and hopelessly damaged by Nile floods; many are torn across preparatory to their having been consigned to the waste paper basket, samples of which article may now and then be found

* Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Vol. i., 1898. The second volume, of equal interest, has now been brought out.

with the documents inside them, having been carelessly flung on the mound.

Not only are their contents so heterogeneous that one may despair of giving in a few words any idea of them, but in numerous cases both sides of the papyrus are written on, and obviously at far different dates, the papers being re-used for rough memoranda.

Thus, on one side we may find songs and poems; on the reverse, accounts. Homer is linked with scribbled calculations, a treatise on poetry is backed by a list of weights and measures, a trade contract by report of a trial before an emperor, military accounts by a list of watchmen in the streets of Oxyrhynchus, a notification of death by a badly-scrawled theme (probably a school copy). All sorts of documents—taxation papers, receipts, sales, leases, wills, petitions, orders for arrest, municipal reports, lines of shorthand, cooks' meat bills, lists of clothes, letters (even one of a schoolboy), invitations to dinner, &c., &c.,—jostle each other in these heaps.

It has been from such papyri that a fourteen-year cycle for registration purposes has been proved to exist in Egypt; it has been already traced back as far as A.D. 20, and is possibly much older; indeed it is almost impossible to doubt that under the Ptolemies (though household lists have not yet been found among Ptolemaic papyri*) a fairly accurate

* In most cases the Ptolemaic papyri have disappeared, the towns having been continuously occupied in the Roman and Byzantine periods; it is only when the sites were deserted in those later times that we are likely to find them.

system of enrolment and assessment was in working order.

It now remains to compare the known dates of any Roman census operations with Dr. Ramsay's cycle; the arguments already urged to show the difficulty of building up evidence of even a single universal census upon them applying, of course, *a fortiori* to the suggestion of a regular periodic recurrence of these world-wide operations.

Intervals of twenty and twenty-one years respectively separated the declared enumerations of Roman citizens by Augustus; if we take that of B.C. 8 as a base line (and there is no other possible), his next census of that important portion of the community was, according to the hypothesis we are reviewing, eight years delayed, being effected at a date which quite ignores its cycle.

The state of health and age of Augustus would not prevent or even delay any enrolment regularly decreed by the Senate and himself, and appointed to be carried out by local magistrates, though Dr. Ramsay gives that excuse (p. 160), especially as Tiberius had then for some years been associated with him in the government.

The alleged census *in Palestine* of B.C. 8, the historic character of which is the kernel of the whole controversy, will be dealt with separately and later, as it demands special treatment.

With regard to the three census operations in Gaul recorded as held under the same monarch, none of their dates agree with the fourteen-year cycle.

In the case of the provincials subjected to the census of B.C. 10, had those unfortunates to go through the same process two years later; and those dealt with by Germanicus—are they supposed, after having been included in the universal census of A.D. 7, to be again registered in A.D. 14?

The reasons already given (p. 170 f) against the possibility of the Syrian census of A.D. 7 forming part of a universal one equally tell against Dr. Ramsay's thesis, it being only necessary to add that a valuation of property, as well as a record of population, as that was, has no analogy whatever with the lists merely of households without regard to property carried out in Egypt at about the same date.

Respecting this census, Dr. Ramsay, wishing to show the slight accidents to which we may be indebted for evidence of his cycle, says, "The evidence for the second periodic enrolment in Syria lies in the chance preservation of an inscription in which a Roman officer recorded his service at Apameia,"* strangely overlooking or disregarding Josephus's full and clear records of it in two different places in his histories, showing that it bore solely upon that portion of Palestine that was absorbed in the Syrian province, and who could not have so written except with the express but motiveless intention to deceive, if he knew all the time that the operation was merely a part of a process that at that date was going on not only in the other districts

* That of *Emilius Secundus*. (See p. 171.)

of Palestine (Galilee, Trachonitis, for instance), but actually throughout the whole Roman world!

The next periodic date is A.D. 20, and history is absolutely silent as to any census operations anywhere save in Egypt.

The census on the Cilician tribe of the Clitæ in A.D. 36—the date fairly coinciding with one of the Egyptian periods—has been claimed by Dr. Ramsay as a fragmentary detail, by chance spared, of one of these universal enumerations, the whole of the remaining traces having been lost through the uniform, systematic neglect of historians. He *first* says (p. 162) “There was made *in Cilicia*, in A.D. 35, both a numbering of the people and a valuation of their property,” but, bearing in mind that the Clitæ were a “rude” race, giving just the same trouble eighteen years later (Tac., Ann. xii., 55), and in that instance bodily retreating to two hill fastnesses, there would not be much fixed property to assess upon, and any personal tribute would be upon the clan as a whole through its chiefs, the process having no analogy whatever with the systematic household registrations of Egypt.

This levying of an impost and local revolt is *next* claimed by Dr. Ramsay as evidence that a census was carried out at that date *throughout Syria** (!)

* “Similarly, it is only by indirect inference, through the accident that a rebellion was provoked, that we learn of the fourth enrolment in Syria” (Ramsay, p. 166).

“The evidence is found in Tacitus: had the authority been a mere Christian, his words would have been ridiculed and disregarded” (Ramsay, p. 168).

But Cilicia Tracheia cannot be shown to be part of that or any other province; it was nearly always, and actually at that moment, under native rule. (See p. 172 f, and Strabo's earlier, but distinct, testimony as to the Imperial policy respecting it, p. 110).

Moreover, had this levy been part of a general scheme on the Egyptian basis, it must have been already applied to that district at the last cyclical period, A.D. 20-21, when it was for a time uncontestedly provincial, Archelaus having been deposed four years earlier, and its routine re-imposition in A.D. 35-36 could not have been spoken of by Tacitus, or looked upon by the tribe as an innovation.

These difficulties are not met.

As for the census of A.D. 48 under Claudius, it is definitely stated to be a lustral census of Roman citizens whose numbers are given, besides it is a year too early for the Egyptian period, and though we could understand a postponement we fail to imagine any valid reason for pre-dating it slightly.

The levy on the whole of Gaul carried out in A.D. 61 is near to one of the Egyptian intervals, though Dr. Ramsay does not claim it, and it can hardly have been mentioned by Tacitus (Ann. xiv., 46) in the terms he uses if it were merely a fragment of a world-wide operation, unless, as also in the case of the Clitæ of A.D. 36, he was resolutely bent on suppressing any record of those wonderful undertakings.

Finally, Vespasian's census of A.D. 74 is recorded as a *lustrum conditum* of Roman citizens, and even

if we concede that it embraced others, it was three years before its proper time according to Dr. Ramsay's cycle. The carrying out of such an undertaking so long in advance of its regular period is very difficult indeed of explanation. None is offered.

After reviewing the evidence from the recorded census enumerations, Dr. Ramsay draws the following conclusions :—“Though weakness sometimes failed to carry out the principle, and though in other cases the time was anticipated a little, yet the recorded facts show a clear tendency to conform to the cycle” (p. 166). Also, “If Augustus instituted periodic enrolments in Egypt the evidence of Luke, implying that he ordered a similar system in the whole Empire, and that the system was carried into effect in Syria, has every probability in its favour, and will be accepted by every candid historian” (p. 171).

As to this each reader must now judge for himself. To some, as to the present writer, the rule would appear to be formed solely of exceptions, and the design to be as vaguely traceable as the form of that summer-cloud with the recognition of the likeness of which to different objects the supple courtier humoured the seeming madness of Hamlet.

CHAPTER IX.

LUKE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED (WAS THERE A JEWISH CENSUS IN HEROD'S LIFETIME?)

RECORDED JEWISH NUMBERINGS OF THE PEOPLE — VICISSITUDES
OF THE RACE — EVIDENCE AS TO POSSIBILITY AND ACTUAL
OCCURRENCE OF A CENSUS.

WE have found no corroboration from external sources of Luke's story as to a universal census carried out or even commanded by Augustus, and we have now at last to find a date, at all events, for that registration which he definitely states took place in Palestine, and brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

It cannot have been the historic one undertaken by Quirinius in A.D. 7 for several reasons.

In the first place that was laid upon the inhabitants of Judæa and Samaria alone, those divisions of the country having been then annexed to Syria, and as residents at Nazareth Joseph and Mary at that date would be well within the territory of Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, who had obtained from Augustus, eleven years before, the grant of this portion of his father's dominions, and subject to restrictions as to the amount of taxation (two hundred talents) to be levied by him on his subjects,

and the way it was estimated, had a free hand so long as any arranged conditions were respected, and no Imperial trouble created.*

There would therefore be no need for any householder in Galilee to go into Judæa, then passing under direct Roman control, for census purposes; and moreover, if Joseph, because he was of the tribe of Judah, was compelled to go though resident in the Tetrarchy of Antipas, it follows that all those belonging to a southern tribe though dwelling in the adjacent dominions of his half-brother, Philip, would be under the same necessity. Indeed, where is this liability to stop?

Again. The revocation of Pilate, under whom occurred the crucifixion, taking place in A.D. 35, the death of Jesus would be at the very latest possible in that year, and the census in question having been carried into effect at the earliest in A.D. 7, it follows that, allowing these the most extreme time limits, the life of Jesus cannot be made to extend over more than twenty-seven years, whereas Luke in a subsequent passage (iii., 23) represents him as being about thirty years of age at the commencement of the ministry.

And, after all, this most favourable view is hardly

* The question “Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?” could not well have been asked of Jesus if he as a Galilean subject of Antipas was equally with the Judean population liable to this impost, for it would in that case be known if he had always paid or refused to pay; but might well be put by the Jerusalem casuists, who, as provincials, would be under direct Roman rule, if they knew that owing to his nationality he did not contribute.

defensible, as it assumes that the order for the crucifixion was almost the last act of Pilate before his recall, and as John the Baptist was only six months older than Jesus, his age at the time of his execution could not have been more than twenty-six years, which is hardly within the bounds of possibility.

In days when P. Quirinius figured as "Cyrenius," a quite unknown official; when it was not deemed improbable that Romans would command a tribal sorting of Jews; and when chronology was so little regarded that an event which happened ten years after the death of a king could be alleged to have occurred during his life without serious protest, the census told of by Josephus was accepted as that referred to by Luke, and the grave objections indicated above would not have sufficed had not Matthew's story of Herod's malign action at the time of the nativity rendered the position untenable unless the first gospel narrative were thrown over.

The progress of investigation into the real circumstances of the life of Quirinius enabled at a later date commentators to declare that it was to an earlier holding of the Syrian governorship by that dignitary that Luke refers; a contention apparently supported by the "*iterum*" found in the Tiburtine inscription claimed as his (see p. 120). This conclusion has, however, in its turn been shattered by the definite demonstration that the whole of the last years of Herod were occupied by other known Syrian officials, so that any earlier

possession of that office by Quirinius is of no consequence here, as it could not have commenced prior to the king's death.

Though Dr. Ramsay burns his boats, relying uncompromisingly upon the verbal accuracy of the third Gospel in its present state, yet there are others who, while generally agreeing with his thesis as to the date of the nativity, are ready to admit that the "Quirinius" in the text may be the result of forgetfulness on the part of the historian, or may even be an interpolation by a copyist of his manuscript; a slight and reasonable concession affording, at first sight, an easy way out of the difficulty.

But, unfortunately, the narrative is not helped by this excision, for, putting aside Quirinius altogether, a census, commanded by Rome, causes the journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus there; and, if the census cannot be sustained, this visit with all the details as to the Divine announcement to the shepherds, the scene in the temple and return to Nazareth—all the story in fact—falls with it.

It is, therefore, not sufficient to dislodge that Imperial legate, but requisite to examine the probabilities of *any* census commanded by Rome, even under another governor, taking place in Herod's kingdom during his lifetime.

The ingenious attempt by Dr. Ramsay to turn the *impasse* with regard to the mention of Quirinius will be first examined.

He says that Quirinius, being in command of Syrian legions for his campaign against the Homona-

denses (see pp. 114 and 118) at some date between B.C. 9 and 6,* received from Augustus a somewhat abnormal appointment as *legatus* for the purpose, and that it is to this position that Luke alludes when he employs the same word (with its derivatives)—*ηγεμών*—as he uses in a later portion of the Gospel to express the official rank of Pilatus, who was but procurator, the word, a generic one, simply designating that person who holds the highest authority in the place named, and therefore to be discriminated by the context.†

He contends, therefore, that the Greek word might equally be interpreted “dux” or military leader, Quirinius’s undoubted position towards the legions as commander in a campaign, and this view might be freely conceded had the word stood by itself.

But in this case the specific phrase “*of Syria*”‡ which follows in the text indisputably puts quite a different meaning to it, just as in the passage concerning Pilate which he instances the mention of Judaea indicates clearly the character and limitations of the authority exercised.

At the time of King Amyntas’s campaign (B.C. 25) the wild mountain district peopled by the

* If the “mox” in Tacitus’s sentence already given (p. 113) has meaning (and he is quite aware of the value of words), the date of the campaign may be fixed soon after Quirinius’s consulship—say B.C. 10-9.

† For instance, “The Governor of Chelsea Hospital,” “The Governor of Jamaica,” “Our Queen and Governor,” &c., &c.

‡ “*ηγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου*” are Luke’s words (ii., 2).

Homonadenses was either recognised as properly belonging to him, or else was a sort of no-man's-land that he was desirous of annexing on account of raids from thence; it could not have been regarded as appertaining to any Roman province, or he would not have dared to attempt its reduction by force of arms.

His dominions were afterwards absorbed in the new province of Galatia (see Strabo, xii., 5, 1; also Eutropius, vii., 10), this rugged border district in all probability going with it, for, separated by the whole length of the locally-governed Cilicia Tracheia, it could hardly have been allotted to Syria and controlled from thence.

Syrian legions would, it is admitted, be employed for Quirinius's campaign; there were no others available, and they were drawn from when required in all troubles in the neighbouring East as far as Armenia without regard to kingdom or province, but in this case there would only be one or two of them, with some auxiliaries.

The province would not be further denuded for such a relatively petty and localised warfare, nor would the commander of such an army corps operating abroad be placed over those remaining in their home stations and cantonments.

Augustus, therefore, was not likely to have given Quirinius for the purpose of his campaign a title representing him as in any sort governor of *Syria*, though this must be maintained, if it be contended that Luke followed an official term which he found recorded.

It needs hardly to be further enforced that no person could be said or thought to hold the *hegemonia* of Syria when conducting a campaign far away in the Taurus ranges, while all the time there was a properly appointed *legatus* in charge of the province itself, Saturninus or Varus, according to the date chosen, not only present but closely entangled with the events in Palestine then occurring, such as the arbitration in the dispute with Sylleus and the public trial and sentence of Herod's sons in the one case, and the visit to Herod in the capital, and afterwards the personal conduct of a sanguinary repression of insurrection there, in the other; rulers who must have been by every one associated therewith, as with any other matters concerning the internal management of the province—a census, for instance, if such a complication really occurred in that troubled time.

If with the majority of authorities we accept two pro-prætorships of Syria for Quirinius, and superadd this former anomalous appointment in B.C. 8-6, during the government of Saturninus or Varus, which last postulate is necessary for Dr. Ramsay's argument, then we have the extreme of unlikeness, the employment of the same official so repeatedly in a single province.

We now turn to the alternative and widely differing view advanced by Archdeacon Farrar (p. 660) as follows:—

“And since the celebrated treatise of A. W. Zumpt (Das Geburtsjahr Christi, 1869) it has been all but demonstrated that Quirinius—although the fact is not

distinctly mentioned by any ancient author—was twice Legate of Syria, viz., A.U.C. 750-753, and again A.U.C. 760-765. Neither the sneers nor the attacks of critics have in the slightest degree shaken this probability; and since Justin Martyr appeals to the census tables of Quirinius, and Tertullian to those of Saturninus, there is no critical unlikeness in the conjecture that the census may have been ordered by Sentius Saturninus, begun by P. S. Quirinius during his first term of office as Legate of Syria, and completed during his second."

The statements of both Justin and Tertullian will be examined in the chapter in which the nature of the census is dealt with, but as the special passage of the latter, just alluded to, in which Saturninus is mentioned in connection with it, is put forward also by Professor Ramsay as helping the date he has chosen for the nativity, it will be as well to give a few words to it in this place.*

It is in no wise disputed that there was a census of some sort in Syria, as elsewhere, at that date, and under that governor, the second enumeration of Roman citizens by Augustus having been *then* effected; but it is the uncorroborated and highly improbable extension of this census—not only to the provincials, but also to the dependent kingdom of Herod—that is on trial, Tertullian's historical accuracy being such, on this very subject, that though the facts could in his day be easily ascertained

* The actual words of Tertullian are—"Census enumerations were made at that time (*i.e.*, of the nativity) in Judæa, under Augustus, by Sentius Saturninus."

through the *fasti*, and the histories and annals then extant and available, though now lost or fragmentary, and surcharged with the blunders and frauds of centuries of copyists, he actually places the nativity at a date subsequent to the death of Herod, indeed after the close of the administration of Saturninus's successor.*

And yet Professor Ramsay can say, "He (Tertullian) would never have contradicted Luke as regards the name unless he had obtained the fact on undeniable authority."

In the days of Tertullian earnest disputations with the Jews as to doctrinal, prophetic, and historical points were and had long been rife. He himself had written against their views; in some of these arguments the evidence of their own well-known historian as to Luke's census would inevitably have been brought forward on the part of the Christians, and he would be but a poor Hebrew polemic indeed who would fail to look into Josephus and retort, "Yet you say that Herod sought to kill your Messiah, who was born ten years after his death!" So acute a pleader as Tertullian would be sure to avoid such a damaging position, and find from the annals that the Governor of Syria at the proper date would be Sentius Saturninus.

Upwards of a hundred years later, when Eusebius

* Tertullian fixes Jesus's death in A.D. 29, during the consulate of Rubellius Geminus and Rufius Geminus, making his age thirty; he thus takes back the nativity only to B.C. 2 or 1, when Herod had been dead two or three years.

wrote, the Church and Synagogue were at open war. The Jew was not argued with or even listened to ; anything he might say would be scornfully ascribed to the stiff-necked perversity of the detested race ; the Gospel documents, almost in their present form, had attained canonical rank, and were regarded by the laity as supreme and infallible authorities.*

Thus we find the Church historian bringing in anew Josephus's census as evidence in the matter of the date of the nativity, regardless or unconscious of the historical difficulties its introduction would occasion later to the critical mind.

As a matter of fact Tertullian's deliberate and unapologised-for divergence from Luke only shows that in his day that portion of the narrative at all events, with its very secular proœm, was not looked upon as divinely prompted.

Respecting the remainder of Dr. Farrar's passage it may be commented—(1st) that Zumpt is far from being an infallible guide, his monograph being most unequal, with strange and grave blunders from one so erudite ; (2nd) that neither “distinctly” nor indistinctly has any ancient author hinted even that Quirinius twice governed Syria ; (3rd) that Varus ruled there till after Herod's death, so that a census initiated by Quirinius does not fulfil the conditions of the problem.

* Eusebius's words are (Eccl. Hist. i., 5) : “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in that year in which the first census was taken, Quirinius being Governor of Syria.” And he adds : “This census is mentioned by Flavius Josephus, the distinguished Jewish historian.”

When Dr. Farrar suggests that the census of Luke might be commenced by one ruler of a province, carried on by another, and ended by a third (a span of perhaps nine or ten years covering three changes in the government of Judæa) he can only mean, though he refrains from saying so, that a property survey throughout the country is included in the operation. By giving this character to it the difficulty arising from the circumstance that Luke and after him Justin name Quirinius as the acting official, while Tertullian names Saturninus, is at first sight evaded.

But the Romans took tribute *in bulk* from subject kingdoms, leaving the invidious task of apportioning taxation to the nominal ruler. Thus a survey and valuation of land or property by them, or even a poll-tax, for their exchequer, would be incredible. They had in Palestine no organisation to carry out such a thing ;* it was only when Archelaus's ethnarchy was absorbed in their Syrian province that Roman military or fiscal officers would enter the country and administer, according to the regular system, the lands and property belonging to the State, which as a ground-landlord afterwards leased them, taking rent in cash or produce.†

It will be further seen that Dr. Farrar's explan-

* We know that Roman legionary officers superintended this process in the Syrian census.

† Judas, the Gaulonite, declared the census of A.D. 7 was directly slavery (Jos., Ant. xviii., 1, 1), showing that any previous census (if such occurred) had not the character of inquisition into property.

ation flatly contradicts the unbiassed witness of Josephus, who distinctly relates that the A.D. 7 census was a new thing carried out on the annexation of Judæa, a most satisfactory and sufficient reason; not that it was merely the fag-end of a tedious process that had been going on for years; also that upon the hypothesis of such a long-lasting operation the peremptory removal of a family at a most inconvenient time cannot easily be justified.

On neither of these obvious points of difficulty is any explanation even attempted.

However, Lewin (*Fasti Sacri*), on the other hand, is so precise that he considers this self-same census was carried through on the 1st August of a certain year! He must mean that a registry of names, perhaps of ages, but of nothing else, was begun and finished in one day on the modern system, of which method — impossible, indeed, with the imperfect organisation and defective communications of that era—there is, of course, not the faintest trace in the ancient authors. Besides, there was no one period of the year for this migration that would equally suit the inhabitants of Galilee, of the sub-tropical district of the Jordan, and of the uplands of Southern Judæa —so differing in climate and cultivation.

Finally, it must not be overlooked that this would be a hitherto untried operation in Palestine, demanding immense labour in the preliminaries, and an extensive staff; and that in Egypt, with a complete organisation, *an entire year* was allowed for the same simple operation.

The contentions of the defenders of Luke are thus as diverse and mutually destructive as some of the alternative legal pleas may have been; yet, as the concessions of one disputant are not binding on another, it is imperative to notice all.

It is indisputable (Professor Ramsay's elaborate exposition from Strabo being needless) that Herod was only king on sufferance and that his kingdom was technically part of the empire, *possibly* subject to tribute and certainly with the liability to supply troops and stores when called upon. Never did he claim any other position, but still he had been nominated and afterwards fully recognised by Rome as king, and kingdoms such as his were governed in the native manner, not the Roman,* that practical people wisely contenting themselves with political control, leaving the customs and habits of the subject races as far as possible untouched.

No motive for this census can therefore be reasonably found in a Roman taxation scheme. Dr. Ramsay wisely admits this:—He says (p. 108), “It was wholly and utterly unconnected with any scheme of Roman taxation,” his opinions on this matter being diametrically opposed to those of Dr. Farrar, whose lengthy census *must* have had that end in view.

In the speech before Augustus (Jos., Ant. xviii., 92), made by the leader of the Jewish deputation

* Of all these countries some are governed by kings, but the rest are under the immediate authority of Rome with the title of provinces, to which are sent governors and collectors of tribute.”—Strabo, xviii., 3, 24.

after Herod's death, one of their grievances is that "besides the annual impositions which he had laid upon them all they had to make presents to his favourites"; and in the sequel we learn that Archelaus's revenue was 600 talents. This passage is clear evidence that Rome did not collect taxes in the dominions of Herod or of his successor, save that, in the case of the latter, Gaza, Gadara, and Hippos, as we elsewhere learn, were once more put under the financial and political control of Syria.

There is strong probability that during the reign of Augustus *no tribute even* was exacted from Herod's kingdom; there is no record of such, and the gift of half the revenues of the Cyprus copper mines* seems incompatible with such an arrangement. The lavish expenditure of the Jewish king in schemes of material improvement, such as the formation of the great international port Cæsarea, and the construction of the line of fortresses guarding the Arabian frontier, so useful to Rome, would be likely to balance in the eyes of the Imperator and Agrippa any direct contribution, and was perhaps the condition of exemption.

Though Herod certainly got some taxation out of the land produce in spite of the priesthood (see Josephus, *Ant.* xv., 9, 1), he was no doubt compelled to fall back principally upon such things as house,

* "And Cæsar made him (Herod) a present of half the revenue of the copper mines in Cyprus, and committed the care of the other half to him, and honoured him with other gifts and incomes" (about B.C. 14-13) (Josephus, *Ant.* xvi., 4, 5).

trade, and market taxes, excise, highway and bridge tolls, &c., for his revenue.

None of these, nor a poll-tax if incident, would be helped by this counting of the people at Rome's command.

It has been put forward in the dearth of practical motives, that a desire to know the limits of an exceptionally dangerous population, and their fighting strength as possible rebels, caused Augustus to command this census, but, putting aside the fact that causing a man to be removed from his residence is ingeniously adapted to defeat that end, a census so minute in its inquisition as to include women and new-born children cannot have been devised by any sane person for such a purpose.

The plain truth is that the Hebrew race were not seriously to be dreaded, nor were they a cause of alarm in the capital.

Their territory abutted on the east on deserts thinly inhabited by fickle, though kindred tribes, who had often proved that they could not be trusted as allies. It lay between Egypt without sympathy, and Syria always in opposition, thanks to intense religious antipathies; even in their own country the Samaritan and the Peræan had a rooted dislike to them and would not combine for any purpose.

The fortresses, all towards Arabia, and the central stronghold Samaria were held by alien garrisons while the country had been designedly left open towards the Syrian frontier; moreover, they had no hold on the sea coast.

Thus, any revolt would be necessarily localised ; an important consideration to the Roman strategist. It was not like an outbreak in Gaul or Numidia, when tribe after tribe might, after any success, be induced to rally to a national standard.

As for their capacity for resistance to Rome, it is useless to instance their first national successes in the desultory war of A.D. 68-70, for contempt of their antagonists had been the cause of the primary Roman reverse ; while the paralysis of the Imperial arms which caused the long delay in the reduction of Jerusalem, was due solely to political complications.

It will be shown later that the *nature* of this census of Luke would render most difficult the attainment of any other Imperial end, even if such can be suggested ; the hypothesis alone remaining that it was imposed on Herod simply as a punishment during the period of his disgrace, his people, however, being the real victims.

But Augustus could hardly have degraded himself by venting a petty and indirect spite upon a king whom he had himself made and could unmake at any moment. It is too childish ! Nor could he have wished to disturb unnecessarily and prematurely that small hornets' nest Judaea, where things were automatically advancing towards absorption, Herod's co-operation having facilitated the introduction of the Graeco-Roman customs and modes of life in all the countries under his control.

The king was then about sixty-six years of age,

with many descendants and collaterals actuated among themselves by the most rancorous hatred and jealousy as to the succession. Augustus knew them well, nearly all, for many had passed years in Rome, and would be aware that he had but to let a short time go by, and all alterations in Judæa he might desire could, without cruelly humiliating an old friend and steadfast supporter, be with facility carried through.

It will also be as well in this connection to see to what length of time Herod's disgrace extended.

Now Saturninus, who succeeded Titius in B.C. 9, was governor of Syria during the following series of events, which we will divide into three sections.

First. Herod appeals to Saturninus concerning Sylleus's encroachment, on the Arabian frontier, who orders restitution. Sylleus sees him *several times*, but finally starts for Rome without complying.

Herod storms the robber stronghold, the Arabian regulars interfere, and a fight ensues.

The exaggerated account of this reaches Sylleus at Rome. (These events must bring us into B.C. 8).

Second. Sylleus as a suppliant gains an audience of Augustus, who is deeply offended with Herod, sending a severe message.

Sylleus — encouraged by this — sends letters to Arabia, causing to be made further attacks on the frontier, which Herod, in his state of disgrace, dares not resent.

Obodas—the Arabian King—dies, Aretas succeeding; a system of calumny, carried out by Sylleus

and his friends at Rome, prejudicing Augustus against him.

Aretas, desperate, sends emissaries to Rome, who charge Sylleus with poisoning the late king, &c. Herod sends also, but Augustus will not listen to either.

Herod despatches a second embassy, and his envoy, Nicolaus, is able, indirectly, to explain and defend his case; Augustus then sending a message of reconciliation and punishing Sylleus. (This section covers the disgrace).

Third. The detection and punishment of the plot in which Pharisees and palace officials are concerned is effected.

The convening of the judges and assessors at Beyrout, for the trial of the two sons of Mariamne.

The discovery of further plots, and the consequent execution of the sons.

The correspondence of Antipater with his friends at Rome, when he found his position untenable in Judæa, to obtain Augustus's command that he should be sent to him, and his subsequent voyage.

Now Saturninus was replaced by Q. Varus, *at the very latest*, in the early spring of B.C. 6, but more probably in the previous autumn—that of B.C. 7,* so that, allowing time for our third series of events, the duration of Herod's disgrace cannot exceed, even

* The first (known) coins struck by him are dated in the twenty-fifth Actian year, beginning April 7th, B.C. 7, and ending April 7th, B.C. 6.

if it be extended to, a year, and he would have been restored to favour quite early in B.C. 7 ; and that being the case, the infliction of this absolutely useless as well as abnormal census—the mere preparations for which, in a country unused to such operations, would have demanded much time — is a most improbable circumstance.

Dr. Ramsay implies, however, that the reconciliation was not complete and that Augustus still owed a grudge against Herod. Josephus is our sole authority on the subject of the estrangement between the Imperator and his vassal, and *he* most unequivocally states that Augustus, on the case being completely put before him, acted as any honourable man would have done who finds that he has been misled, by expressing his regret and upbraiding Sylleus that through his falsehoods he had been induced to treat with unmerited severity one who was his friend.

The impulse to give Arabia to Herod as an extension of his kingdom till the further proof of the intestine quarrels in the family rendered such a step unadvisable must be viewed in the light of an intended reparation for a wrong ; yet Dr. Ramsay claims to judge, not only without the production of a scrap of evidence, but in open defiance of that which exists, what was in Augustus's mind ; though he can censure severely Gardthausen for daring to draw a conclusion of exactly the same sort when in his case it is based on ample and well-considered data.

Zumpt (p. 204) thus defends the possibility of a

census by Augustus's command in Herod's lifetime, while there was yet another, in A.D. 7, equally under Roman dictation, though undeniably differing in its mode of dealing with the people. He says :

“A double census took place in Judæa, the first according to Jewish, the second to Roman methods, both, however, being commanded by Rome. Such a repetition of the census, though in a different form, has nothing improbable, and may be supported by similar examples.”

He proceeds to instance the case of the Frisians, who, we learn from Tacitus, were assessed at two different times. This needs a little examination.

Now the Frisians were a wild nomad tribe, dwelling beyond the Rhine or between its numerous outlets, among a tangle of lagunes and shallow streams, at the present day, owing to the great storms and inroads of the ocean in the thirteenth century, under water and forming the Zuyder Zee.

Drusus about B.C. 11 had imposed on their communities a tax of ox-hides for military purposes, this claim forty years later being made much more onerous by the requirement that the skins should be of the largest size, though their domestic cattle were small, and in A.D. 28 they rebelled, defeating the Roman forces, and remaining in semi-independence for about twenty years, till Domitius Corbulo (in A.D. 47) subjugated them, afterwards assigning a fixed territory and organising a tribal government, no doubt at the same time rendering them, through

their national chiefs, as was the custom, regularly tributary.*

How Zumpt could call these haphazard proceedings, fifty-eight years apart, in the treatment of a wild frontier tribe a “doppelte Schatzung,” and see in them a close analogy with methodical registrations of individuals in a civilised kingdom, is indeed astonishing.

The only other case which he produces in defence of his position is that of the Cilician tribe of the Clitæ. This subject has been fully discussed (see p. 172 f) and Zumpt’s views distinctly controverted, inasmuch as the basis of his reasoning is the position of this tribe in A.D. 36 as provincials.

To call these instances “ähnliche Beispiele” is a remarkable thing.

But Dr. Ramsay finally makes a still bolder claim on behalf of Luke than any yet advanced, for he says :—

“But why did not Luke distinguish clearly between this enrolment and the later enrolment in A.D. 7, which was held by Quirinius in Syria and in Palestine? We answer that he does distinguish accurately and clearly. He tells us that this was the first enrolment of the series, but the moderns are determined to misunderstand him” (p. 246).

That is to say that admitting that there had been two registrations carried out at the interval of fourteen or fifteen years the first, unknown to history, and conducted in Jewish form, whatever that

* Tacitus, Annals iv., 72, and xi., 19.

may be, the readers and hearers of Luke's words, nearly all far removed geographically and racially, as well as by almost a century of time, would be well aware that when he writes "this enrolment was first made," he is referring to the obscure and unproved Jewish one, and in nowise suspect that the passage relates to that *historic* census associated with the name of Quirinius by the great national historian, who definitely states that it was without precedent, which was notorious for provoking opposition and even local outbreaks, and was the result of the break-up of Jewish nationality and its partial absorption into the Roman dominions, a reference to which seems to the dull "moderns," or some of them, so plain an interpretation of Luke's words apart from the refinements of commentators.*

The new faith undeniably spread upwards from the common people, so that niceties of historical detail affecting a remote country, since crushed, would not be "common knowledge." Paucity of manuscripts, illiteracy, and the indolence of simple faith would alone shut out close inquiry, just as the last factor often effectually does at the present day.

How then could Luke expect that his indefinite language should be with such certainty interpreted in a certain sense (if that sense be indeed his)? And we may plead, moreover, that this obtuseness or contumacy is not confined to us moderns. Eusebius

* Some seem to think of Luke, for instance, that
"He could but ope
His mouth, but out there flew a trope."

shows us that in his day it was prevalent in the church.

“First of a series!” This being, we are told, the guiding star to Luke’s readers.

There is no likeness whatever between this hypothetical one and the historic census of A.D. 7. The first is tribal—people are moved about with no conceivable or at least defensible object; the real one was a Roman census, taken at home of course, for taxation and valuation of property as well as record of numbers.

And after this there is no trace whatever of another in Palestine. It is a strange series indeed!

It may, however, be said that other later enrolments may have taken place in that country though unchronicled, it will therefore be as well to examine the probability of their occurrence.

Ten years after the Syrian census of A.D. 7 the extortions of the Roman officials had become so unbearable in Judæa that the Jews sent a deputation to Rome, Tiberius being compelled to call the attention of the Senate to these grievances and suggest a remedy.

Thereupon, after such an authoritative intimation something was doubtless done towards a redressal of these wrongs, the hated inquisitorial census being possibly suppressed and revenue raised on a more national system.

That no series existed of these enumerations at a somewhat later date is rendered almost certain by the circumstance that Cestius Gallus, the governor of

Syria in Nero's time, desiring to get a fair estimate of the actual Jewish population, hits upon the scheme of forming a computation from the number of Paschal lambs slaughtered at one of the Passover feasts, a very imperfect plan, which would be wholly unnecessary had any census been held within the last twenty years, as allowances from it for births and deaths could have been easily made and would have far more closely approximated to the truth than such a clumsy expedient.

The constant changes that took place in the political government of Palestine, especially between A.D. 37 and 70, and the complications due to the irregular manner in which the territory was again and again divided, with free towns, tetrarchies, monarchies, &c., rendered any well-considered plan of census out of the question.* It had been felt at the time of Claudius that disintegration had been carried too far in southern Syria, and that a recurrence, if possible, to the policy of Augustus, which was to have a fairly strong native state in Palestine, would be expedient. This, however, was

* A.D. 37. *Herod Agrippa*, grandson of Herod the great, is given by Caligula the N. region of Philip; and

A.D. 39. On Antipas's banishment, Galilee and Perea; and

A.D. 41. By Claudius, Judæa and Samaria. (He died A.D. 44.)

A.D. 48. *Herod Agrippa the younger*, after he came of age, was given by Claudius the N. region of Philip, and soon after further territory. Nero gave him large increase of territory.

A.D. 70. After the taking of Jerusalem he retired to Rome.

N.B.—All districts unnamed, and the rest in interregnum periods, were ruled by Roman officials.

again reversed when the practical sense of Burrus ceased to guide the external policy of the Empire, and Nero's favourites gained control.

In order to show that Herod was under severe restrictions towards the close of his life rendering credible the punitive imposition of a census, Dr. Ramsay brings forward the incident, recorded by Josephus, of the oath of allegiance demanded by him, in the second reference to which by the historian the name of Augustus is included in the formality, placing it without warrant or probability at a late date in the king's life, it being there helpful to his views.*

He then quotes from David Strauss's "Leben Jesu" as follows:—

"That this oath, far from being a humiliating measure for Herod, coincided with his interest is proved by the zeal with which he punished the Pharisees who refused to take it,"

and upon this passage most severely comments:—

"Incidentally, we may notice, as a masterpiece of irrationality and uncritical prejudice, the reflection which Strauss makes about the oath of allegiance to Augustus. Naturally Herod had to punish the refusal as an act of treason. If he did not do so, any of his enemies could ruin him by reporting the fact to Augustus."†

* The full quotations will be found in the section on Matthew's narrative (p. 100, ff.)

The second passage is obviously merely a reference to the first, to illustrate the habitually antagonistic attitude of the Pharisaic party towards the king.

† Zumpt, oddly enough, selects the same small foot-note for criticism: neither writer takes any further notice of Strauss's reasoning.

This is strong language, but that Strauss in this instance was not without justification is apparent from the following considerations.

Banishment at the very least would have been the lot of the non-juror Pharisees had there been an oath imposed *by Augustus*.

It would not have been in the power of Herod to have excused whom he pleased (as he did), and it is preposterous to suppose that it could have been commuted by a small fine which Pheroras's wife, a woman of the lower order, a creature of Herod's bounty through her husband, could pay for 5000 recusants, a most insulting pretence at reparation. Such a proceeding could not have been kept secret, and would inevitably have been reported to the Imperator, who in that case could not avoid taking action.

It is therefore fairly evident that the imposition of the oath was merely a scheme of Herod's own contriving * when early in his reign he was attempting to secure his position, and that the introduction of the name of Augustus, who had given him the kingdom, was an astute move to link the authority of the all-powerful Imperator with his own, getting a joint allegiance which might have been refused to him singly from those who he knew would profess to be ready to swear fidelity to Rome, as they had already done twice not long before and were indeed soon to do again. (Jos., Ant. xviii., 9, 2.)

* Josephus, our *sole* authority for the incident, never even suggests that it was ordered by Augustus.

This is just what his equally subtle enemies, the Pharisees, were not to be enticed into doing.

An argument drawn from the silence of a single historian is, it is confessed, generally of little value, but, while admitting this, it is to the last degree singular that if this strange unprecedented census took place while Herod was under disgrace or immediately afterwards, Josephus, so full of minute detail for the period, says nothing of it directly or indirectly, but on the contrary actually tells of that of A.D. 7 as an innovation, and as being from that cause marked by partial revolts.

Now the good faith of Josephus in this portion of his history is beyond dispute; he would care little under the Flavians what Augustus did or did not do in Judæa in Herod's time, having therein no possible motive for falsification or suppression, and to put aside as valueless his unbiassed because unconscious evidence is a heavy responsibility.

CHAPTER X.

LUKE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED (NATURE OF LUKE'S CENSUS).

MEANING OF "OWN CITY"—METHOD OF CARRYING OUT THE CENSUS.

IN reviewing the nature of Luke's census we have first to find the real meaning of his phrase, "everyone to his own city";* or as Professor Ramsay puts it, "the proper city of his tribe and family," for assuming this Jewish census during Herod's life to be historical, the term must have had at the time some clearly definite interpretation which could be understood by the people, or if requisite, explained to them by the officials, so that they could comply with the decree.

It cannot be where he or she is born, for that may occur anywhere.† Witness the case we are discussing.

It must, therefore, mean the place whence the family (in the male line) have originally sprung—

* "ἐκαστος εἰς τὴν ἰδιαίν πόλιν" are Luke's words.

† This Zumpt admits (p. 195) : "Mochte Joseph in Bethlehem geboren sein oder nicht: Lucas sagt er sei dorthin gezogen, nicht weil es sein Geburtsort, sondern weil es die Stadt Davids war, und er aus dem Hause Davids stammte."

still a vague definition—for it is in the case of Joseph at Bethlehem, which, as it is alone mentioned, we must first take as typical, the city or village in which a certain ancestor—David—was born about one thousand years before, that being the motive of his going there.

But why take David as a starting point? why go back so far? It is all purely arbitrary, for David was but one of the line of greater celebrity. Or why stop at David? why not go back to Jesse, or Jesse's father or grandfather, indeed further still? There is no limit till we touch the times of Joshua, when a pastoral people were attempting a settlement in Palestine and displacing where and how they could the original inhabitants of already existing towns and villages.

And why should the place where David was born be classed as "his city"? He did not live there, his sons were born elsewhere (in Hebron and Jerusalem), so that even in the very next generation there was no natal connection with that village. Nor was Bethlehem exclusively called the City of David, for we read in 2 Chronicles ix., 31, that "Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David his father," *i.e.*, in Jerusalem. (See also 2 Saml. v., 9.)

A strict limitation of this compulsory movement to the professed descendants of David, no other inhabitants of Palestine being disturbed, is the solution which the dull mind of the author of the apocryphal "Protevangelion of James" invented to meet the difficulty, regardless or probably uncon-

scious of the new absurdities it brought with it ; the passage being as follows (xii., 1):—“ And it came to pass that there went forth a decree from the Emperor Augustus that all the Jews should be taxed who were of Bethlehem in Judæa.”*

Luke, however, does not say this ; “ every one to his own city ” cannot be governed by that strange limitation, the vast mass of Hebrews who had not the pretension to belong to David’s line having to be reckoned with ; and we ask, at what step in the line backwards is the ancestor to be chosen whose city (of birth) is to be fixed upon as that of his descendants through hundreds of years ?

In the case of Bethlehem it is David who is made to afford the artificial datum line ; are we to suppose that in all other cases the birth-place of the ancestor who was contemporary with David is to be discovered and journeyed to ;† and if this is too absurd, what tenable or even possible suggestion can replace it ?

[It is perhaps as well here to point out that the plain and simple sense of Luke’s words, that “ all ” (Herod’s subjects) went to their own cities, *i.e.*, that any absent from home were required to return for the purpose of the enrolment, a reasonable, indeed

* The apocryphal “ Gospel of the Infancy ” makes the census a still more extraordinary event, viz., (i., 4), “ In the 309th year of the era of Alexander, Augustus published a decree that all persons should go to be taxed in their own country.” (!)

† In that case Jerusalem must have been absolutely emptied of professing Hebrews, as it had been a Jebusite town up to David’s day, and could have been the “ own city ” of none of them,

necessary, requirement if evasion was to be prevented, and which we find existed in Egypt under similar conditions, could have been accepted here and all complications avoided, were it not for the circumstance that Joseph's forced journey is because he was "of the house and lineage of David"; not because he lived there.

The stable incident alone negatives that possibility, even were it not indisputably proved that Nazareth was the real home of Joseph and Mary by Luke's words in recording their actions at the close of their sojourn in Judæa. "And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their *own city* Nazareth."*

To reconcile this passage with the remainder of the context, we are, therefore, compelled to assume that the migration was an exclusively Hebrew requirement, based upon tribal and family descent, and having no incidence on the Gentile subjects of Herod.]

We have next to consider the question whether tribal distinctions could have been accurately maintained in Herod's days.

The numbering by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai was of every male over twenty years fit for war—nothing more—the privileged tribe of Levi being counted separately (Numbers i., 49), and in the unfinished census made about five hundred years

* "εἰς τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν Ναζαρέτ."

later,* under absolutely different social conditions, by David, that priestly tribe was not counted at all, as it was liable neither to taxation nor military service, women, children, or old men not being enumerated in either instance.†

The terrible penalty inflicted by Jehovah on the innocent Israelites (70,000 being slain) for a technical default of their monarch would hardly make them anxious to repeat such a process; while after the very next generation the alienation between the N. and S. sections of the race rendered for ever such a scheme impossible even if desired.

As these two (the second one being abortive) are the only countings recorded in the annals of 1500 years, during the far greater portion of which time, both before and after David, any census of the race was impracticable, it is difficult to see why a "Hebraic and national" census system should be confidently referred to by Church writers.‡

* The tribal numbers given in 1 Chronicles as "fit for war" would appear to have been taken from David's census (in one case the phrase "in the days of David" is used), though most characteristically no information as to date is vouchsafed in the text.

It is not meant that on no occasion could there be during the time of the irruption into and settlement in Palestine a muster and counting of tribal men who could be called upon locally for military service. It is only urged that no census of the entire race is at any time alleged, or was at any time practicable.

† See 2 Samuel xxiv., and 1 Chron. xxi. and xxvii.

‡ Dr. Ramsay says (p. 186): "Obviously the best way to soothe the Jewish sentiment was to give the enrolment a tribal character, and to number the tribes of Israel as had been done by purely national governments." And again (p. 108): "The census of Herod was tribal and Hebraic, not anti-national. It roused little indignation and no rebellion."

It must be pointed out also that David's attempt at numbering was planned on the basis of the visitation of the registrars, not on a forced movement of any portion of the populace, therein having no analogy with that of Luke's Gospel.

At the time of the numbering by Moses, his people were purely nomadic and pastoral, habituated to a tent life, such as may still be found in Arabia and the Soudan, under which conditions definite tribal divisions can alone maintain themselves.

The permanent territorial settlement in Palestine ultimately attained, with its accompanying agricultural and civic development, and the inevitable intermarriage with races akin, such as those of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, who mingled with them in their cities, as even did the Canaanites in many districts, would have gradually dissolved any strict separation of clans, introducing hopeless chaos into such a patriarchal organisation.

As David gradually extended his rule, the alien people were not slaughtered or expelled, they were to a great extent absorbed (we may instance the Calebites of the Hebron district, and the Jebusites of the capital); and in a few generations, no doubt, their descendants could make good a claim to descent from a Hebrew stock.

The trading compact with Tyre, under Solomon, whose father had succeeded in welding for the time these scattered units into a kingdom, brought in a vastly increased intercourse with the exterior world, and the thirst for the gains of commerce heretofore

contemptuously left for the Canaanite, with the result of still more breaking up antiquated distinctions; so that already in that Monarch's lifetime we find administrative divisions of his realm which quite ignore the old tribal classification and limits (1 Kings iv., 7 ff.).

But this union of the race was of short duration. At Solomon's death a deadly feud broke out; the northern and middle tribes, the far larger portion of the community, seceded, and under an elected king—Jeroboam—formed for themselves a separate group, whose centre was soon fixed in Samaria, the ancient territory of Ephraim, this severance of the two branches being never healed. When about 250 years afterwards the northern kingdom was overthrown, the inhabitants (if we may literally interpret the Jewish annals) were *all* carried beyond the Euphrates, whence there is no record in history of their return, though it is more reasonable to suppose that very many temporarily dispersed remained ultimately on the land, and blended with the newly-introduced Cutheans, assisted in reoccupying its towns and villages.

In the south, where Simeon had already disappeared as a separate tribe, the feeble kingdom of Judah, after a precarious and often tributary existence somewhat longer protracted, thanks to its more secluded position, met with a similar fate, the larger and more influential portion of its people being deported to Babylonia.

When under Cyrus, seventy years later, some few

returned, they settled in and about Jerusalem, not only, in all probability, because the city and its desolate environs would not have been attractive to exterior settlers engaged in cultivating the land, but certainly because the new-comers needed concentration, surrounded as they were by a mixed and partly alien population.

The people, mostly poor, left behind under the rule of Gedaliah along with the neighbouring population that had pressed into the vacant territory, had been offered the country to cultivate under tribute to Babylon, being told that they might dwell in what towns they pleased. These people would not quietly yield up possession after nearly three generations' enjoyment, and their forcible expulsion, of which we hear nothing, would be difficult.

The second and socially more important band of immigrants under Ezra and Nehemiah either brought with them the ancient sacred writings or re-edited them, and were zealous to make Jerusalem again the capital and rallying point of the race; in pursuance of this policy they rejected the friendly overtures of the mongrel folk in Samaria, at first sympathetic, and asserted themselves to be alone the purely Jewish people with Mount Zion as the accepted dwelling-place of their God, while at the same time they had from their training beyond the Euphrates much modified the ancient crudely anthropomorphic conception of Jehovah.

Thus they alienated for ever a people almost within their gates.

Under these conditions it was inevitable that the theocracy would be restored, the religious ordinances more rigorously insisted on, and the position of the superior priesthood greatly exalted, the high priest taking the place of a secular monarch, while the ordinary tribal Levite was relatively degraded to the position of a temple servitor.

After a century of vassalage to Egypt, then in the same subject position to the Syrian monarchy, with the High-priesthood sold by their masters to the highest bidder, with Hellenism universally affected by the influential classes, anarchy and corruption everywhere, the Mosaical rites including circumcision proscribed, the books of the Law burnt where found, the country had drifted into a condition of hopeless national degradation.

At length the intolerable position for the mass of the people who clung to the old faith ended in rebellion, and a popular leader arose in Mattathias, whose son, Judas Maccabeus, continued the struggle.

After a long interval of comparative silence in history, we obtain once more in the times of Judas, about a century and a half before Herod, a fairly historic view of the Jews in Palestine.

They are then massed in Judaea, Samaria is hostile, the outlying scattered portion of the race in Galilee and Peræa are rescued and brought in by the valour of their leader. There is no tribal distinction—Israel and Judah are convertible terms—the ecclesiastical pretensions of a fortunate branch

of the house of Aaron alone remain of the ancient divisions.

The Israelites lose and regain petty districts, according to the strength or weakness at the moment of their opponents or the energy of their own leaders ; towns nominally in Judæa are Jewish, Philistine, or Moabitish at intervals, while sometimes the citadel belongs to one and the suburb to another.

We find, for instance, that Judas has to recapture Hebron, barely thirty miles from Jerusalem, from the Edomites (Josephus even calls it an Idumean town !), while Bethsura, yet nearer to the capital, was a constantly disputed position.

Afterwards, in a time of prosperity and relative aggrandisement of the Maccabean line, we learn that John Hyrcanus forced the subject Idumeans and Itureans to accept circumcision ; an illustration of the racial mixture that was still in progress.

During the decline of the dynasty, the country of Palestine underwent almost every possible variation of disintegration, amalgamation, and change of government ; at one time being a cluster of petty republics, interspersed with free towns ; then more simply divided, and again broken up at the whim of the master of the Roman world for the time being.

There was no stability or finality anywhere, towns and districts were arbitrarily handed over to alien communities, and in a few years all again was changed.

The reconsolidation of these scattered elements into a state was the work of Herod under the

sanction of Antony and afterwards of Augustus, being at the time of which we are writing quite recent history.

What a country this glimpse discloses for the safe-keeping of accurate genealogical lists of private individuals for very many generations, and for a discrimination of one's original "own city!"

Finally, in the days of Herod the Jews were to be found throughout the Roman world, and even far beyond it, having, owing to the acute vicissitudes of their national existence, overflowed into every country east and west, thousands as slaves, thousands as emigrants and traders.

Each large city had its populous Jewish quarter, where the chosen people dwelt apart, Rome and Alexandria, Antioch, Corinth, Cyrene, &c., having their *ghettos*, while in the far east the long-established Babylonian colony was a vast and spiritually influential one.

Nearer home they swarmed in Damascus and the cities of Cœle-Syria, while in the dominions of Herod himself, outside their recognised national districts, towns with Gentile origin or claims as those of the Decapolis and Peræa, with Cæsarea, Scythopolis, &c., had large Hebrew populations, among whom the distinction would be primarily whether Jew or Gentile, and if the former, whether Judæan or Galilean, Herodian or opposed to the dynasty, Pharisee, Sadducee, or Essene, or follower of either division ; not of what tribe the man's far-off ancestors may have been alleged to have been.

There could not, under all these adverse conditions, have been at this date residence as a custom in special tribal cities.

Yet Dr. Farrar writes: "The Jews clung to their genealogies and tribal relations, and, in consequence of the settled habits of Oriental life, most families would be naturally resident at their native place"; and Professor Ramsay comments (p. 188): "Owing to the care with which the Jews preserved their family records and pedigrees, all true Jews would know what was their family and their proper city according to the ancient tribal system, even though they might have been forced by circumstances to have changed their abode."

It will be observed that both writers lay stress upon a system of pedigrees prevalent among the Jews; it will therefore be necessary to say a few words on the subject.

False pedigrees were as easy then as now to construct; Herod had one made for himself. How then could *he* trust such documents?

And what test could be applied? The belief of the present head of the family in his pedigree would not count, unless we pre-suppose perfect honesty for unnumbered generations—an ideal society—in the midst of political and social changes almost unexampled in their severity.

No doubt often people claimed to belong to certain tribes or families when it might give an air of authenticity to their position as fully qualified Hebrews. Luke (most irrelevantly, considering his

deficiency in useful detail) represents Anna as of the tribe of Asher; Paul is a Benjamite as well as a Roman citizen; while Barnabas is alleged to be a Levite.

Education among the average Jewish people would have been for centuries on a par with that of the present middle and lower class Moslim—the faculty to write and repeat passages from the sacred books, the exposition of which was in the hands of teachers such as the “hazzan” or synagogue reader, or in the higher grades the “sopher” or scribe, each entirely wanting in scientific training. Tax-gatherers and such officials would be useless to sift pedigrees.

Of the scrupulous and continuous accuracy and methodical arrangement that are imperative in genealogy there is not a trace in any of the writings of the Hebrews, and they were apparently wholly unconscious of their necessity.* This is not urged as a special reproach, it being a common fault of the time, but as a negation of the standing pretence of the infinite superiority of that people to all others in absolute accuracy of statement throughout vast ages.

* To mention only a single instance of notable inexactitude, see the varying statements as to the sons of Benjamin in Genesis xlvi., 21, in Numbers xxvi., 38, and in 1 Chronicles vii., 6-7, and viii., 1-2; while an unparalleled example of want of method will be found in the lengthy lists of tribal names, numbers, and distribution in 1 Chronicles i. to ix.

The remarkable pedigrees inserted in the texts of Matthew and Luke will be later examined.

The Levites, and that influential division claiming to be descendants of Aaron, and later of Zadok, had the best of reasons for keeping alive their claims to special ancestry,* but the descendants say of Dan or Asher or Manasseh would have in general little inducement for doing the same, even were it possible, for surely there is always a pecuniary or social gain in prospect when such pretensions are passed down to the descendant, or invented for his benefit.

Josephus in his treatise, "contra Apion," dwells on the care taken with regard to the pedigrees and marriage alliances of the priestly orders among his people.

Speaking in this instance as a professed advocate, it is unquestionable that he presents the strongest possible case, and had he said that accurate pedigrees were general throughout the community, although we might doubt the fact, the assertion of it would have shown that such a claim was put forward; but he asserts nothing of the kind, his claim being exclusively on behalf of the sacerdotal families—there being a clearly defined motive for this particularity. He adds: "So that the stock of the priests should continue unmixed and pure, the priest must take his wife's genealogy from the ancient tables and procure many witnesses to it"; and he goes on to say that priests in Egypt or Babylonia, or in any part of the world, "send to Jerusalem the

* See Ezra ii., 62, and Nehemiah vii., 64, as to the great importance attached after the return from Babylon to unmixed descent of the *priests*; none others.

names of their parents in writing, as well as those of their remoter ancestors, and signify who are the witnesses also."

He further says that if wars occur, the priests who survive compose new tables of genealogy out of the old records (which would seem always to be providentially preserved), and finally boasts "we have the names of our High Priests—from father to son—set down in our records for two thousand years."* The value of these pretensions will now be tested by what is found in the Old Testament records bearing on the subject, and his own writings.

For this purpose we will take the most famous and important line in the whole of the Hebrew nation—that of Aaron,—the succession from whom, as far as the captivity, is given in 1 Chronicles (vi., 3 to 15), and also in Ezra (vii., 1). We find that, after an agreement between the two lists as to the first eight names, Chronicles has six others, which are wholly wanting in Ezra; this carries the line down to the dedication of Solomon's temple, when both lists again start abreast with Azariah. They continue in agreement till the seventh descent brings us to Seraiah, whose son—in Chronicles—is Jehozadak (or Jozadok), High Priest at the time of the captivity; the book of Ezra, however, being concerned solely in tracing the descent of Ezra himself, here turning aside from the main stream to register that individual as (another) son of Seraiah.

* That is, many centuries before the earliest date of Moses!

Jehozadak is therefore the brother of Ezra, and yet considerably more than seventy years after the former, when already High Priest, has been deported to Babylonia, the latter returns to Judæa to found a new settlement!

Again, in the six names belonging to the line before Solomon, which, given in Chronicles, are omitted in Ezra, there is a sequence of three—Amariah, Ahitub, Zadok—that is found repeated *verbatim* in the section between Solomon and the captivity.

The exactitude claimed by Josephus is not very apparent in any part of these lists.

In addition to these genealogies, we have the statement of Josephus himself, who (Ant. x, 8, 7) furnishes eighteen names of high priests for the interval between the dedication of the Temple and the captivity, of which the last five are identical with those in Chronicles; and as he adds “all these received the high priesthood by succession, the sons from their father,” it is *indisputable* that the list in the latter book must also be of high priests, though the fact is not mentioned. This being so, that Josephus for the entire interval gives eighteen names, while Chronicles has only nine, is sufficiently conclusive against the trustworthiness of one or other authority, the case against Chronicles being even at first sight a strong one, for according to it the average duration of the holding of the high priestly office during a range of four centuries would be upwards of forty-five years. But this is by no means the worst,

for the last five names being the same in each authority, we have only four names in the one case to fill the remaining span of years that is occupied by thirteen in the other, an aggravated disparity which no ingenuity can explain away or even extenuate.

It will also be noted on examination of these lists that Josephus definitely names as high priest at the dedication of the temple, *Zadok*, who does not figure in that position at all in *Chronicles*, though twice over in other places; also that all the early names from that period are irreconcileably different in the two authorities. *Chronicles*, however, has here the support of the literally identical list of *Ezra*, if that may be deemed an independent record.

The glaring divergences of Josephus's list from that of the very book which he professes to regard as his infallible guide to the history of the past, and on the very subject respecting which he enforces its unique authority, are extremely curious.

A further passage (*Life* i., 1), in which he writes, after tracing his descent backwards to his great-grandfather, "Thus have I set down the genealogy of my family as I have found it described in the public records," has been used to show that lists of the entire nation were in existence; but it is transparent that he, in the passage, is only referring to the priestly (temple) registers in which his family, of the highest dignity, indeed a high priestly one, and almost certainly residing in the capital, would be inevitably recorded. The passage affords no support to the

extraordinary view that the ancestry of the common people throughout the land was so accurately registered.

Again, Zumpt (p. 217) most astonishingly claims these “public documents”* as *census registers*, and thinks they all went to Rome! He does not help us in the least with the problem how all these ancestors of Josephus could be therein inscribed, which at once confronts us; nevertheless he is followed in this view by Dr. Ramsay, who says (p. 172) “Josephus, *Vita* i., apparently is quoting similar enrolment registers when he speaks of the evidence for his family history.”

The conclusion here suggested is that no definite meaning whatever attached to Luke’s loose phrase “own city.”

Though, as we have seen, Luke’s words “own city” appear to be incapable of accurate definition (none at all events having as yet been applied to them), we must now pass on to test the actual working of a census in which certain sections of the populace are removed from home, no matter to what place they are sent.

In real life the questions, Who is he? what is he? what does he possess? are best answered and verified in the locality where the man is settled.

From this cause every census without exception, when a register of obligations, not of privileges, has been built upon the foundation of a home inscription,

* “Δημοσίας δέλτοι.”

in which the head of the household is answerable for the correctness of the return.

A voluntary basis for such operations is an impossibility ; compulsion with a system of penalties for evasion is inevitable.

The forced temporary migration of an indeterminate proportion of the people from their settled homes, where they could not make false statements with impunity, would render accurate results impossible ; the most ordinary information as to numbers in cities and districts would be out of the question, while the adjustment of any direct tax, if incident, would be deliberately obstructed.

In this case evasion of the migration arrangement would appear to be so easy, as well as advantageous, that it would assuredly be the rule, and no result of any sort could be reached for the reasons following.

Neglect to go, in other words neglect to claim, would not injure the status of the Hebrew as descendant of any one, among his countrymen who alone would be interested ; for this estimation would depend upon personal repute or family registers or traditions, not on the certificate of Herod or Rome, when neither King nor Imperator valued at one denarius a special descent from any son of Jacob.

You can hardly establish an inquisition to force people to prove their ancestry, and there was no conceivable inducement to draw the Hebrews generally in troublesome journeys to their own cities, whatever that term may be made to mean, nor could

there have been any living authority that could correctly tell them where they ought to go, if they did not themselves know or wish to know.

There would have been most certainly at that date, owing to political conditions, the suspicion that compliance with such an unheard of requirement might involve peril or invidious distinction—that they might be marked men—for if any special tribal or family designation would to Herod's mind brand them as malignants (it has even been suggested that he planned the scheme with that object), that fact would be known equally to themselves, and they would hardly give voluntary aid in carrying out such a classification.

We cannot, on the other hand, suppose that people would have their pedigrees proved in spite of themselves, and be then compelled to march—somewhere.

Compulsion in this matter would therefore appear impossible, though without it there could be no uniformity or use in the arrangement.

Dr. Ramsay, dealing with this subject, says :—

“ Herod disguised the Roman and foreign character by the additional requirement that the census should be tribal, and thus less alien to the national feeling ” (p. 107); and adds: “ All who claimed to be Jews were to repair to the proper city of their tribe and family. The rest of the population, who were probably more numerous, would be counted according to their ordinary place of residence ” (p. 188).

Every one in Palestine would be aware of their king's absolute dependence upon the Imperator,

therefore the simple avowal of his inability to resist would have been his best and safest apology.

Yet he is supposed to go out of his way to make an enumeration, commanded by Rome, more vexatious than it would have been to his Jewish subjects, especially to those who—as inhabitants of mixed towns such as Sepphoris or Bethsaida, or of cosmopolite cities like Cæsarea or Gadara, where they swarmed—would under these circumstances have keenly felt the injustice that *they* were compelled to make a journey at cost of time, trouble, and expense, for the mere purpose of inscription of their names, which their Gentile neighbours could effect at home, and would hardly appreciate this peculiar concession to national sentiment.

It must not be overlooked that there is no possibility that in this hypothetical census (whatever might be its aim—fiscal or statistical) the subjects of Herod, whether professed Hebrews or Gentiles, would be subjected to different or preferential treatment; so that the “Roman and foreign character” of it would be alike for all and could not be evaded, the Hebrews alone, however, having the disagreeable distinction of having to make journeys, if living away from an ancestral town; this regulation being supposed to “disguise” it to a shrewd and suspicious race.

Let us now take the very ordinary case of husband and wife with one or more young children, a large proportion of the married people coming under this description, those childless being a

minority, and consider the practical working of this system.

Must the parents, if non-resident in their "cities of origin," go their way, at a certain date, together or separately, as the case may be, or must the whole household move? Only on this last amazing supposition can the census have any analogy with a household enrolment,* for where the head of the family—and perhaps his wife—may have to make a journey, relatives, children, servants, remaining in the house cannot be properly or authoritatively enumerated.

How in the case of old age, illness (real or feigned), infirmity, or any such disabilities, is this arrangement to be carried out? How, if the people are poor, though professedly of good family, and how in the case of that great majority of the population who, from their avocations—civil, legal, religious, or engaged in commerce, or in trade as bakers, butchers, carpenters, graziers, fishermen, &c., &c.—could not possibly quit their homes to make this eccentric pilgrimage?

It is not like the case brought forward by Professor Ramsay as a mark for ridicule of "how are the shepherds to be registered?" for it is only by taking account of all these details that the possibility, and therefore the historic character, of the thing can be tested.

* "Not merely by households, but also at the same time according to descent and stock—that is by tribes" (Ramsay, p. 107).

Nor would this journey be always so simple a matter as is frequently represented by commentators. If we take the case of Joseph and Mary, it would be an affair of quite four or five days each way even with quick travelling, and taking the shorter, but at that time more objectionable, route through Samaria ; no light undertaking for private individuals, probably poor, in an almost roadless country.

Josephus (*Life* 52) has urgent occasion when in authority at Gabara (just beyond Nazareth) to send delegates to Jerusalem ; they are hurriedly despatched with a guard and every facility, and he comments "It is absolutely necessary in order to go quickly to Jerusalem to pass through Samaria, for by that road you may in three days make the journey."

Even now an aggregate of full twenty-four hours of steady riding (*i.e.*, three days of fatiguing travelling) is necessary to take one from Nazareth to Jerusalem by the nearest route, that by Gînæa (Jenin) and Sichem (Nâbulus), in great part over a dreadful track, it cannot be called a road.

And Joseph's journey is by no means an example of the maximum of possible inconvenience, for as the decree extended to the whole of Herod's dominions, and the Jews as already shown were everywhere, considerably longer and more arduous pilgrimages would in extreme cases have to be made in order to comply with it.

Dr. Ramsay, in defending the reasonableness and practicability of this migration arrangement finds a parallel in the ancient Roman law, that the regis-

tration of *cives Romani* must take place in the capital only; but not to dwell on the facts that that was a claim to a highly valued and jealously guarded privilege, and that the restriction in question had been at the date we are considering long abolished, even for voting purposes* (see p. 165), it is sufficient to point out that in the one case the people were concentrated, rendering the task of the enumerators more easy, in the other they would be deliberately scattered over a number of towns and villages, large and small. As there would be no possible means of estimating the pressure on any one locality, an enormous and well-trained staff would be imperatively demanded, whose business would be that of a Herald's College to examine and certify genealogies for ages past, it being obvious that a man is no more a descendant of David because he goes to Bethlehem than a Moslem who makes the pilgrimage to Mecca is thereby a descendant of Mahomet (it being only the assertion of a claim, not the proof of it), and, if his word is to be taken, what is the use of moving him about?

In the special case of Joseph and Mary, the untimely journey of the latter to Bethlehem (an obvious difficulty) has been alleged to have been compulsory—various reasons having been assigned, one being that she also was of David's line, her

* Even at the present day the resident at Exeter who has a parliamentary vote for Edinburgh is compelled to go there if he desires to exercise that franchise, but no one would think it the same thing if he was required to journey there to inscribe himself in the census.

attendance being from that cause necessary, and another that she was an heiress having property in that village.

With regard to the first attempt at explanation, we may remark that it is a strange circumstance that both Matthew and Luke, while emphatically insisting on the Davidic descent of Joseph, ignore any claims on Mary's behalf to that ancestry (see the chapter on the genealogies, p. 271).

It will also be observed that this explanation implies absolutely that in other cases where husband and wife happen to be of different cities they would be arbitrarily separated, and compelled to take dissimilar journeys; an unprecedented, as well as useless, act of absolute power, utterly opposed to the customs of the East, or, for the matter of that, of the West also, and too extravagant to demand serious confutation.

The second extraordinary suggestion is not only weakened by the fact that the possession of property in a place would not necessarily demand the presence of the owner (who might have land elsewhere), at all events with urgency, but is finally destroyed by the statement made by Luke that the family on arriving at Bethlehem had to take refuge in a stable, the alternative shelter that failed being a public resort for travellers, which, bearing in mind the circumstances, is conclusive against Mary having relatives in the village, or even being known there.

Nor have we even any right to surmise that the birth took place at the very moment of their arrival,

for in that case they could not have made application at the inn ; moreover, Luke's words, "while they were there,"* cannot properly have that meaning.

A form of poll-tax incident not only on men but also on women, and on children of the two sexes above fourteen and twelve, which Ulpian states was imposed *in Syria*, has been brought forward as the compelling motive of the journey of Mary, in spite of the complete absence of evidence, to say nothing of probability that in Herod's time such a tax existed in Palestine.

The impost spoken of by Ulpian was of far later date, when the whole country had long been Roman territory, and has no bearing whatever on the system pursued in the semi-independent kingdom of Herod ages before.

However, Zumpt can say, after speaking of this Syrian "*tributum capitisi*,"

"In Judæa, apparently, the like arrangement existed, at all events the two sexes were treated in the same manner as to the poll-tax. Consequently, Mary, on her own account and without reference to Joseph, was under the necessity of going to Bethlehem for the taxing" (p. 204).

But if this special tax was either already in existence in Herod's kingdom or then newly imposed, why was a movement of the people necessary *on this occasion only* to carry it out, and why did not the same necessity exist for the Syrians in an identical tax ?

* "Ἐγένετο δέ ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτοῦ ἐξεῖ."

All this Zumpt does not explain.

And after all, if the point be conceded and the palpable and already raised objection that the adjustment of a poll-tax would only be defeated by migration be waived, then it necessarily follows that in the census in question all sons and daughters over fourteen and twelve respectively would have to join their parents' march, leaving the younger members of the family at home!

Which is absurd.

Thus we may assume that the journey of Mary was a purely voluntary one, in which case it is difficult to suggest any adequate motive for a step at such a time, repugnant to Hebrew or oriental sentiment or indeed to their ideas of decency or propriety.

On this point, however, we have the views of Dr. Farrar, who says:—

“If the attendance of Mary was not obligatory (which is uncertain), nothing is more natural than that at such a time of trial and danger she should have accompanied the only person who could protect her.”

Yet, only a few months before, when unmarried, she had most unconventionally* made an almost similar journey by herself. Surely, the “danger” would be far greater on that occasion, and at the later date—under the conditions recorded—it would have been demonstrably safer, as well as more reasonable, to have remained in the home at

* The conduct attributed to her cousin, under precisely similar circumstances, that “she hid herself five months,” is much more in accordance with Eastern notions of decorum.

Nazareth, certainly surrounded by neighbours and probably by relatives.

Her husband, had he gone alone, could not, on arriving, have required more than a day or two to fulfil any possible formalities of registration, and he would therefore be at home again in ten days or a fortnight at latest, being, of course, able to travel far quicker and better without the encumbrance of a wife in such a condition.

It is difficult to follow Dr. Farrar's reasoning.

But, as both Joseph and Mary had full knowledge of the Messiahship of the predestined babe, the Hebrew Messiah being popularly expected to "come forth" from Bethlehem, might not this knowledge have made them desirous of carrying out prophecy by causing the birth to take place there?

Yet, if this be so, it is inexplicable that they should have deferred the visit till so close upon the inevitable and long foreseen event, thereby running the risk of failure, and more extraordinary still that a peremptory edict so exactly synchronised with their voluntary actions, that they could, in apparent deference to *force majeure*, make a journey to a special village which they had, in any case, pre-determined in their own minds.

Dr. Ramsay, after contending that Luke was desirous of connecting his narrative generally with the history of the Empire, adds (pp. 70-71) :

"In such circumstances it is obvious that the historian was bound to be specially careful that his references to Roman history, and especially his first reference—the

subject of this study—were accurate. But the accusation which we have to meet is that it grossly misrepresented the character of Roman procedure, and was inaccurate in fact. If the accusation is right, any Roman citizen who possessed even a small knowledge of the facts of administration must have seen the gross inaccuracy at a glance. How then does it happen that while the circumstances of the birth of Christ were closely scrutinised by the opponents of Christianity, and subjected to much misrepresentation and many charges of falsification, no one in Roman times seems to have discovered the inaccuracies which many modern inquirers imagine for themselves?"

Dr. Ramsay here repeats and accentuates the assertion that had often been made before, that the facts respecting the census during the life of Herod, resulting in the birth at Bethlehem, as told by Luke, were at all events not contradicted in days near the time when evidence would be easily forthcoming.

It happens indeed that public challenges yet extant to adversaries and sceptics to bring this special matter to the test and verify for themselves were issued quite independently by two eminent Christian writers at different periods, which challenges were, so far as we know, never met by opponents, and it is contended by Professor Ramsay that it has been only in days when the events in question had been so long past that proof of them would be known to be unattainable that difficulties have been raised, and suspicions suggested, which those having full facilities for investigation were unable to substantiate or even to formulate.

We will now see what can be traced of the views

of those outside the Christian community in the first centuries as to that association ; then, what are the exact words of the challenges addressed to them to verify for themselves, and finally, what chance or possibility there was of their doing so.

The absence of reference to the Christian sect on the part of the Jews themselves in the first century, which might at first sight imply want of knowledge, may be noted. Philo of Alexandria, in his voluminous works, some written perhaps as late as A.D. 50, never speaks of the Christians, and Josephus, writing between A.D. 80-95, also ignores them save in one indirect notice, the passage of direct reference being spurious.

However, this silence, most probably in both cases, was due to the aversion felt by men of highest rank and social position in their nation towards the new offshoot of their faith, though both of these writers have been claimed by Eusebius and others as converts, in spite of the opposite tendency of their books.*

Turning to early Roman notices we find Suetonius recording (Claud. xxv.) that Claudius “expelled all the Jews from Rome, who at the instigation of one Chrestus† indulged frequently in riots.”

* The latest commentator on Philo says, “ Suivant Eusèbe, Saint Jérôme, Suidas et quelques autres, Philon, âgé de cent ans ou presque fit un dernier voyage à Rome pour voir Saint Pierre dont il avait entendu parler ; il embrassa la religion chrétienne.”—“Ce sont là de vains bruits.—Il est presque certain que Philon n'a eu du Christ aucune connaissance.” (Philon le Juif. Herriot, 1898, pp. 134-135.)

† “Chrestiani” was a punning but recognised variation of their title.—Tertullian alludes to it.

That this is a pagan rendering of the circumstance that disputes and broils broke out in Rome between the orthodox Jews and those who at that date had been gained over to the new branch of the faith is very certain, the Roman magistracy being unable or unwilling to understand how a leader, whom one party asserted to be dead, could still be living except in a natural matter.

Tacitus also confuses the Christians with the Jews, a circumstance not to be wondered at ; the founder of the new religion, its apostles, its propagandists, and its first communities being of that race.

As we have already seen, Pliny the younger, when governing Bithynia early in the 2nd century, knows nothing about the books of the Christians or even their tenets, merely attempting by the usual and legally recognised method of torture to get at the truth. It was really the secret organisation of the sect that attracted his attention and suspicion, for associations or corporations even for innocent or useful purposes were discouraged and often repressed by Rome. The private gatherings of the Christians would be classed as "collegia illicita," unauthorised associations, and rightly or wrongly suspected of political aims ; and even on the score of morality we can scarcely wonder if strange reports got about as to what took place at the "love feasts," which Tertullian in his later Montanist days, when his tongue was freer, hints were not without warrant.

The passages of Justin and Tertullian referring to the census and the birth at Bethlehem are now to be

dealt with. As those of the latter writer are rather more definite, and the translations are free ones, the words of the originals are supplied.

Justin Martyr, in his first defence of Christianity, addressed to Antoninus Pius, and written about A.D. 148, refers to the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, which he—a native—explains is a village thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, and asserts that its occurrence there can be verified by Quirinius's census lists.

From this it follows that, if Justin is to be credited, the registration was so minute in detail as to record a new-born child! In addressing Antoninus, it may be noted also, he speaks of the census as being “in the time of Quirinius, *your own first appointed governor in Judæa.*”*

It is indisputable that here Justin either believes the census during which Jesus was born to be that carried out when Quirinius ruled *Judæa* (i.e., in A.D. 7), or in the alternative attempts in the passage in question to hoodwink and put upon a false scent the Imperator to whom he appeals. In either case his evidence must be valueless.

It is for those who continually quote Justin and claim his support to deal with this dilemma.

Justin's *apologia*, nominally addressed to Antoninus, would in all probability receive as much personal attention as did that deputation which Philo tells us he headed to Caligula, and which that crazy tyrant dragged after him up and down stairs through the

* ἐπὶ Κυρηνίου τοῦ ἡμετέρου Ἰουδαῖη πρώτου γενομένου επιτρόπου.

new galleries of his palace, interjecting a remark now and then among his commands to the decorators, and finally dismissed without a reply.

In Justin's case a secretary may have read the letter, possibly in the presence of a nobler monarch, but that would be all; a polemic would not be commenced, no matter what the assertion, which Justin, in writing, would well know, so that he had in view others who would be influenced by his challenge.* Even if he proved his case up to the hilt, the fact of a Jewish child being born at a particular date in a Judæan village, could not be thought to go towards proving to a Roman Emperor that He was the Son of God, or even an inspired teacher.

In the same *apologia* we find Justin declaring that, in fulfilment of certain Hebrew prophecies which he quotes, Jesus was set on the judgment-seat at the Prætorium and there mocked (a strange proceeding in a Roman tribunal); that his hands and

* It was the fashion of the epoch to draw up these apologies nominally addressed to the reigning Emperor, sometimes also to the Senate and magistracy; it being a mode of putting before readers of their faith all that could be said in its favour from an exterior point of view, with the added advantage of being able to touch incidentally all the weak places in Paganism and the judicial methods of the tribunals.

When Justin wrote, Quadratus had already addressed one defence of the faith to Hadrian, and Aristides another; while between his date and that of Tertullian, the apologies of Athenagoras and Melito were especially famous.

The earlier apostolic preaching had no such ambitious aim; this tactical movement was the work of the so-called “*philosophers*” and the pleaders, who had joined the new religion and had brought with them their dexterity in dialectics and consequent delight in controversy.

feet were pierced, and that his clothing was divided by lot among the soldiers. He then proceeds to tell the Imperator "that these things so happened you may learn from the Acts drawn up under Pontius Pilatus," apparently quite indifferent to the absurdity that a procurator of Judæa duly invested with the authority of life and death could be supposed to elaborate a report embodying such minute details respecting a single execution in his remote province to the grimly cynical Tiberius.

Again, in the same writing Justin tells the Imperator that a certain Simon of Gitton, a Samaritan impostor, "who had performed miracles by the aid of magic, had been held as a God in Rome itself, and was honoured by you with a statue as a God (in the island on the Tiber between the two bridges), with the inscription, Simoni Deo Sancto—that is, To Simon the Holy God." He actually demands that this monument shall be officially condemned and destroyed.

It seems almost incredible, though true, that he refers to an inscription on some votive column situated on the island between the Pons Cestius and Pons Fabricius, and dedicated to Semo Sancus, the Sabine God, in whose *sacellum* on the Quirinal were treasured some of the most venerated relics of the earlier ages of the city; the real reading of the inscription being of course Semoni Deo Sanco!

That Justin, a resident in Rome, could make such an extraordinary blunder in a matter in which the slightest inquiry would have put him right demon-

strates that he was reckless and unreliable in matters of fact.

In any tribunal other than that of theology, such a witness would be told to stand down.

The quotations from Tertullian are now given (written about from A.D. 200 to 205).

In the first, with the aim of showing that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews was not to be wondered at, he writes (Adv. Marc. iv., 7) :—

“ And, nevertheless, how could have been acknowledged in the synagogue one so unexpected, so unknown, respecting whom none had been at that time certain as to his tribe, community, or family, or in fine as to that census by Augustus, which most trustworthy evidence of the Lord's nativity, the Roman archives hold secure ? ”*

We have here, as in Justin, the definite assertion, not merely incidentally, but to help an argument, that the *birth* of Jesus would be found recorded in census lists yet in existence, and in the hands of the Romans.

In the second passage (Adv. Marc. iv., 19) he says :—

“ But it is also certain that census enumerations were made at that time in Judæa under Augustus by Sentius Saturninus, by means of which his (Jesus's) family descent could have been inquired into.”†

* Tertullian, Adv. Marc. iv., 7 : “ Et tamen quomodo in synagogam potuit admitti tam repentinus, tam ignotus cuius nemo ad huc certus de tribu, de populo, de domo, de censu denique Augusti, quem testem fidelissimum dominice nativitatis Romana archiva custodiunt ? ”

† Tertullian, Adv. Marc. iv., 19 : “ Sed et census constat actos sub Augusto tunc in Judæa per Sentium Saturninum, apud quos genus ejus inquirere potuissent.”

It is upon this passage that Professor Ramsay relies in his contention that Jesus was born between B.C. 8 and 6, as S. Saturninus ruled Syria during that time. This has been already discussed.

In the third passage (Adv. Judæos 8) Tertullian writes:—

“ For Mary, from whom was born Christ, was of the city of Bethlehem and of the house of David, as she is described in the Roman census lists.”*

Here Tertullian was arguing against Jews, and he was shrewd enough to know that naming *Joseph* as of the Davidic line—as Matthew and Luke had done—would be worse than useless, as the retort would be inevitable: “ Yet you assert that Jesus had no earthly father ! ”

If such a record existed, as Tertullian claims, it demonstrates that in this unprecedented census women also had to prove their descent, for if the fact was not for official purposes it would not be registered.

Tertullian, a trained pleader, skilled in all the artifices of the rhetoricians, a fiery disputant, an extremist, to the highest degree intemperate in invective, with whom, indeed, sobriety of thought and language are unusual,† but who can curb his

* Tertullian Adv. Judæos 8: “ Fuit enim de patria Bethlehem et de domo David, sicut apud Romanos in censu descripta est Maria, ex qua nascitur Christus.”

† Gibbon does not exaggerate when (chap. xvi.) he speaks of one of these writings (upon martyrdom) as “ a treatise filled with the wildest fanaticism and the most incoherent declamation ”; nor does Reuss when he says: “ L’injure, le sarcasme, un langage qui rappelle

pen when needful, witness his able "apologetica," addressed to the Roman magistrates in defence of his co-religionists, a self-restraint showing that the epithet "*satis acutus*," applied to him by Mommsen, was not undeserved, is hardly one that should be quoted with implicit trust when making statements that materially help his contention, and at the same time are such as he would know full well are from their nature almost incapable of absolute disproof.

It must not be overlooked that Justin and Tertullian do not merely suggest that any one might possibly ascertain from long past census lists whether there was any record of Jesus's birth, but positively assert as a fact that those census lists containing proof of the nativity were in existence and could be inspected.

In support of the contention that original census papers were long preserved by the Roman authorities Professor Ramsay uses the following argument (p. 156) :—

"We must observe that it was possible for any one living in the first, second, or third century to discover for himself the facts about any of these early enrolments, if he were willing to take a little trouble and show a little care. Accurate observation, registration, and preservation of all facts formed the basis of Roman Imperial administration. We know from Pliny that the facts obtained at every census were so accurately preserved that in A.D. 48 Claudius could verify from the records of earlier numberings the statement

parfois en vérité le genre de Rabelais, *une effronterie d'affirmation dans les noms de faiblesse qui frise et atteint même la mauvaise foi, voilà ses armes.*"

which a citizen of a small Italian town made about his age, and there can be no doubt that similar careful preservation was the rule everywhere, as is proved in Egypt. Abundant material existed on which the historian who was willing to take trouble could base an accurate narrative of facts."

The claim of Professor Ramsay as to the "accurate observation, registration, and preservation of all facts in Roman administration" has been already dealt with (p. 140 ff).

The actual passage appealed to in this instance is as follows:—

Pliny, in giving a list of instances of extreme old age, says (N. H. vii., 50):—

We are informed by Mutianus that T. Fullonius, of Bononia, was set down as 150 years of age in the registration which took place under the censorship of Claudius Caesar; and this appeared to be confirmed by comparing the present with former registrations."

Bononia (now Bologna), which Dr. Ramsay represents as a "small" Italian town, had been for long the chief city of the populous and manufacturing district of *Etruria circumpadana*, becoming a *colonia Romana* as early as the close of the Punic Wars (Livy xxxvii., 57), and had been actually since the days of Augustus the capital of the eighth region of Italy.

Dr. Ramsay deduces from the incident recorded that not only was there a periodic census throughout the Empire, but also that the original papers respecting each of them were carefully preserved, and easily accessible for several centuries, thus

supporting Justin and Tertullian as to the reasonableness of their challenges to doubters to search for themselves for the proofs of the Bethlehem nativity in the public records.

But *this* special search for earlier registrations of a certain man was affected by the express command of Claudius, the master of the Roman world—"for that prince greatly interested himself in ascertaining the exact truth of the matter," says Pliny; having to begin with no analogy whatever with an attempted investigation by private individuals.

And what could be easier than such a verification carried out by the proper officials of the former inscriptions of a yet living Roman citizen residing in a large Italian town, which as privileges were involved were, of course, carefully preserved?

The occasion was a census in A.D. 48 of that privileged class, the three known enumerations by Augustus of the same character being available for the purpose and at dates amply sufficing to show the gradual approach of this abnormal longevity.*

Thus, the man told of by Pliny was not a mere Asiatic provincial or, worse still, the subject of a subject king to be traced after the lapse of a century and a half, when the capital of the country had long been destroyed, the site remaining for years a waste of ruins, while the whole district had been again devastated during the sanguinary suppression of

* At the first census of Augustus the man would be but seventy-four years of age.

an obstinate rebellion, the remaining people being ultimately sold to slavery.

These extraordinary distinctions between the two cases are entirely overlooked by Professor Ramsay when bringing forward this solitary instance from history in support of his views.

It is obvious that official abstracts or tabulated results, even if existent, would be useless for the purpose suggested by Justin and Tertullian. The *original* census papers could alone supply the names of certain obscure Jewish people registered in a Palestinean village, along with the possible record of the birth of a child at the time, from a century and a half to two centuries before their day.

And *where* are these original lists, supposed to be preserved for reference, after such a lapse of time?

If on the model of those of Egypt, they would not be found beyond the chief town of their district; for they would be wanted for corrections during the interval between the periodic years, and for reference afterwards. The Egyptian papyri are all so found, often extracted from dust heaps, after having been in many cases used as waste paper; as might have been expected.

It being out of the question that a place like Bethlehem contained a record office, where, for centuries, papers were stored and arranged for reference, Jerusalem, the local centre, alone remains to be considered, and that capital—after an internecine strife among its populace, three-quarters of a century after the date of the alleged

census—was literally razed to the ground, its site being afterwards for a long time desolate, save for a legionary camp; thus any papers, if any, indeed, were stored there, must have disappeared.

Having regard to the fact that this census, if ever made, was made not in the Roman manner nor by Roman officials, being also demonstrably useless to them, why should they wish to preserve its original papers with minute details of names in their national depositories?

But if, waiving all such difficulties, we admit the possibility of such papers from Palestine being despatched to Rome, then we must also admit that all original lists, not only from every province, but also from all the dominions of allied and subject kings, were after every census forwarded to Rome to further increase the already unwieldy bulk of documents, records, and tablets in the Tabularium or the neighbouring temple of Saturn, and that they were all duly pigeon-holed and labelled for ready reference two centuries later.*

Which is incredible.

The challengers upon these important points discreetly say nothing: those who take them at their word must find out for themselves; nor do they even in pity to the searcher explain, what, if

* Moreover, the Tabularium was almost gutted, and a great portion of its contents destroyed, in A.D. 70, when the Capitol was burned by the troops of Vitellius, Vespasian afterwards obtaining from various places copies of 3000 bronze tablets that had been melted by the heat; papers, therefore, would have stood but a poor chance.

Professor Ramsay's views are correct, they must have known, viz., that there were two enumerations in Judæa following each other at the interval of a few years, both associated with the name of Quirinius, and that it was not the one well known as the cause of national protest, but the other little known one, that they have in their minds.

Thus the *bona-fides* of both writers is under the gravest suspicion.

As to the reception of these challenges.

In this we must look from the stand-point of the Romans of the first centuries, not of the believers of to-day.

Why should men of that age look closely into marvellous histories perhaps written in provincial or Hebraic Greek, even if they were accessible, to study that which they had already prejudged to be a delusion or an imposture, and what would be their impression if they got hold of, for instance, the protevangelion of James, or the Gospel of Thomas, or Paul and Thecla, or the Gospel of Peter (if we may judge from the curious fragment recently exhumed at Ahkmin)? Would they try to correct historical errors therin or point out inconsistencies?

The Roman world, generally, had neither known nor cared to know anything definite respecting the Hebrew scriptures or tenets, though they were far more accessible, as of a nation openly practising its ritual—not a secret society; whose national historian, Josephus, had recently, under Imperial patronage, explained minutely the Jewish theological system

expressly for their behoof; for in their case, as in that of the Christians, contempt shut out inquiry.

It would be only those “addicted to foreign superstitions,” to use their own phrase, who would interest themselves in a variant of Jewish doctrine, and such people would not be sceptics.

These challenges were, perhaps, never seen by any of those to whom they were nominally addressed, or, if seen, disregarded; while, even in the event that they were commented upon as well as read, these comments would fall dead as, upon such an uninteresting subject to the many, they would do now—unless published,—and we know the fate that overtook any hostile writings when the Christian hierarchy once gained the upper hand, and its own documents had been set in order. Celsus is found only in selected fragments, embedded in the refutation of Origen; Orosius, the friend of Augustine of Hippo (about A.D. 420), admits—Gibbon detects a blush—that the Christians of his time were correctly charged with the wrecking of the second Alexandrian library—that of the Serapeum; while in the case of Porphyry the prudent church chose the line of least resistance, and burnt his book with, as an additional precaution, those who harboured it.*

As for the Christians themselves, the present Gospel writings circulated in the first two centuries

* Constantine ordered that whoever should possess a book of Arius, and not burn it, should be put to death.

among their small and scattered communities, being there read privately to willing and believing listeners, many being of low rank and illiterate, recruited from the slave households of the wealthy. They would not be found in the public libraries, nor be copied for sale by one of the great publishing firms of the capital.

The believers who would read or hear of such challenges as those of Justin or Tertullian, many of whom would believe that Enoch and even Adam composed works yet extant, and that the Sibyls wrote prophecies, would not be qualified, or indeed inclined, to follow out the niceties of chronology as to the exact date of a Roman governor, or the complex details of long past papers, nor could they have, for the most part, access to documents which, assuming their existence, had to be laboriously sought out, in distant countries ; antiquarian researches respecting a shattered nationality.*

Besides, it is the fact that in those days we find no trace of critical examination ; a book was orthodox or the reverse, that was the touchstone.

Who, in our own days, has not found in books glaring errors (not printers' delinquencies), most of them remaining uncontradicted ? How many take the trouble to critically examine the "Book of Joe Smith," to track errors therein, or to follow up an alleged cure by St. Winifred or our Lady of Lourdes,

* Dr. Ramsay says (p. 117) : "Luke wrote for readers belonging to the civilised Graeco-Roman world."

or test the statement of the levitation of a medium to the ceiling, or a message from the Mahatmas? It must not be forgotten that to the Pagan the stories of the Christians were equally incredible with these.

Investigation and disproof of the most trifling misstatement or reckless assertion applying only to yesterday entail the expenditure of time, trouble, and perhaps of money; few incur this, while hunting up original evidence on obscure historical points is the reverse of easy, as will be acknowledged by those who have essayed it.

The inevitable conclusion is that no vulgar braggart that nowadays claims lineal descent from the Plantagenets, and defies any one to disprove it, is on safer ground than were Justin and Tertullian when they wrote these so often quoted challenges.

If once it be admitted that the writer or compiler, whoever he may be, of this story of the nativity, having at his date little knowledge of the earlier history of Palestine, treating it in part as when a consolidated kingdom under Herod, partly as when wholly disintegrated more than ten years after his death, has been led into error as to his facts, there is no need to take any but the plain simple sense of his words and phrases.

However, the sacrifice of the infallibility of this portion of the Gospel which this admission involves is apparently inadmissible. Hence there is not a single phrase in the passages we have been examining that has not been put on the rack, extenuated

and expanded, twisted this way and that, by expositors of whom no two agree.

The preceding pages notice a few of these distortions of sense and eccentricities of exposition due to what Pliny calls the "*perversa subtilitas*" of grammarians engaged in the defence of the verbal accuracy of the story. Yet, as Renan justly says, "though an isolated subtilty may be true, a thousand cannot," and the attempt to represent Luke as a past master in cryptic meanings that deep learning can alone lay bare is an offence against common sense, and makes us wonder of what value can be the words that are susceptible of so many contradictory interpretations by authorities all equally orthodox.

CHAPTER XI.

EXTERIOR EVIDENCE INCORPORATED IN THE TWO NARRATIVES (THE GENEALOGIES).

EXAMINATION AND COMPARISON OF THE TWO PEDIGREES.

MATTHEW and Luke have each a genealogy of Jesus; in the former it precedes the tale of the nativity, in the latter it follows it.

Matthew starts the pedigree from Abraham, carrying it on to David, then from David to the deportation to Babylon, and thence to Jesus; in each of these divisions counting fourteen generations, or forty-two in all.

Luke boldly starts from Adam, carrying on the descent to Abraham, thence to David, and finally from David to Jesus.

There could have been no extant family registers by means of which Matthew could carry back the ancestry as far as Abraham, or Luke as far as Adam. Those portions of the lists—mere copies from the names found in Genesis, Ruth, and Chronicles—have no original value whatever; nor is there any possible explanation of their useless insertion, save that it might have been thought to give to the unlearned of the Gentile faithful—who formed, at the date

of writing, the larger portion of the Christian communities—an impressive idea of the definite completeness and accuracy with which the ancient Jewish records had specially preserved and registered, from the remotest times, all facts relating to what was to be the human descent of the Messiah; thus bearing witness to the truth of the faith.

As both lists must be assumed to be inserted in the text of the Gospels to demonstrate a descent from David, that portion of the genealogies that follows his name is of greater importance and demands closer examination.

In *Matthew*, from David, the line descends through Solomon (the father of Joseph being Jacob) in twenty-eight generations. In *Luke*, it descends also from David, but through Nathan (the father of Joseph being Heli) in forty-three generations.

We have here on the first view the gravest discrepancies; not only do the two lists take a different course from the very commencement, there being no likeness even in the name given as of the father of Joseph the most recent member of the family, but the total number of descents since David is startlingly different.

Before examining the details of these two genealogies and comparing one with the other it is necessary to say a few words respecting them as professed records of the pedigree of Jesus going back to his alleged Royal ancestor.

As both authors have admitted into their lists without acknowledgment a mere transcript from the

Hebrew Scriptures for the line beyond David, how can we be reassured that the portion from David to Joseph is more original and reliable?

In the case of Luke's list, the extreme improbability that the lineal descent of men of private station (only two of the names are known to history) for a thousand years, which, as we have seen, had been marked by the most unexampled vicissitudes to the Jewish race, should be preserved throughout in an unbroken series is overwhelming, unless we are content to assume that this special list was exceptionally, and indeed miraculously, safeguarded.

It may be added that the confused and unsystematic genealogies that are met with in the Old Testament give us a very unfavourable idea of the degree of care and accuracy with which the descent even of noted men was recorded (see p. 229 ff.).

The same objection applies to the list of Matthew, but as he is content to copy (incorrectly) the line of kings of Judah to the captivity, his catalogue of ancestors unknown to history is necessarily shorter.

Yet it has been contended that we have no right to judge of ancient Hebrew life by modern and western standards; that the Jews were pre-eminently a literary people, and from a very remote date were accustomed to record everything of importance to their nation, or even to their families. No proofs, however, of this assertion have been advanced, and it may be said that with the exception of the sacred books nothing literary has come down to us from times

beyond the Maccabees. If records were so generally kept, it is very improbable that not only *all* would be lost (though it is a possible contingency), but that they would not even be quoted or referred to in later works; as it is we find nothing but a mass of fraudulent literature, professing to date from ancient times, one book even from before the flood,* while another extremely ancient document was written by Adam himself, the whole being fabricated in the centuries immediately before and after our era.

Moreover, Josephus, in his work "Contra Apion," in which he is directly concerned in exalting the ancient importance of his nation, can only speak of the works known to us, for he says (i., 8) : "We have not an innumerable multitude of books disagreeing and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books which contain the records of all the past times—and of these five belong to Moses." Again : "The prophets who were after Moses wrote down what was done in their time in thirteen books, the remaining four books containing hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life."

He then says : "It is true that our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time."

* The "Book of Enoch"—it is quoted in the canonical New Testament (Jude v., 14-15).

It is thus apparent that Josephus makes no claim to the possession of independent records of early ages, indeed, quite the contrary, for he indulges in a sneer at the Greeks for their multitude of discordant authorities; while the Old Testament, so accurately described by him in the above quotation, is his unique and infallible guide to the history of the past.

That Josephus's claim as to the careful registration of pedigrees among his people applies only to the priestly families, has been already fully shown (p. 228); no pretence being made that private Jewish families, apart from the line of Aaron, had accurate records of descent for hundreds of years.

Again, it has been suggested that in consequence of the Messianic hopes that had been prevalent a long time in Judæa, the genealogies of those descended from the royal line were specially cared for. But, when we read the long list of the sons of David himself (and daughters are not counted), given in 1 Chronicles iii., and remember that he is merely the first term in the series, that the Hebrew race was a fertile one,* that marriage was highly regarded, and the perpetuation of a line deemed honourable—the custom of Levirate marriage attesting this,—bearing in mind also the prejudice against unions outside their own people, it is evident that at the time of Jesus the blood of David must have

* Throughout the long period from David to the captivity, son succeeds father, without a break, on the throne of Judæa, as (according to Josephus) do the High Priests covering the same interval.

flowed in the veins of thousands who might be wholly unconscious of the fact.

Thus, no valid line of distinction between them and the rest of the people could be possible.

To make the confusion greater still, He whose origin is in question, in the only dictum recorded of him which bears on this subject, has indirectly but forcibly repudiated the position of "Son of David," for he entangles his interlocutors in the dilemma "If David calls him Lord how then can he be his Son?"

If we now examine the items of Matthew's and Luke's lists it will be seen that from the captivity to the birth of Jesus, a period of about 600 years, Matthew gives only thirteen names, which would make an average age of the fathers throughout this portion of the list at the time of the birth of the next in descent of about forty-two years. That such an average should hold through so long a period, especially in the East, is absolutely incredible.

We find, however, on collating with the historical books of the Old Testament, that Matthew leaves out three consecutive ancestors, viz., the kings Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, for he says "Joram begat Ozias," whereas he was really his great-grandson,* and this is not all, for immediately

* This glaring inaccuracy was early recognised. Augustine of Hippo, commenting on it, simply says that these three kings were omitted because of their wickedness—as if that prevented them from being ancestors. The more honest Jerome admits the blot.

The three kings are inserted in the Syriac version obtained from the Nitrian monks, but are wanting in the palimpsest in the same

following Josiah he places Jechonias, whom he represents as son instead of grandson, the name of Jehoiakim, the actual son, being completely overlooked.

Thus four ancestors altogether are missing, it being now impossible to decide whether these gross inaccuracies are due to almost incredible carelessness or to deliberate intent to make the scheme of fourteen generations in each division which he enforces fit in; in either case the credit of the list as a trustworthy document is irretrievably damaged, for as, in the portion to which we can apply a test, such mistakes, to use the mildest term, are made, how can we have confidence in the accuracy of that part which we cannot check (*i.e.*, the names from the captivity down to Jesus), especially when, as shown above, their number is plainly inadequate to span the centuries.

Luke, from David to Neri, the father of Salathiel, a period of about 430 years, gives twenty generations, so that the fathers throughout that long period must have averaged at the time of the birth of the son (not by any means necessarily the first-born) through whom the line of descent passes, less than twenty-two years of age, which is almost as grossly improbable on the one hand as Matthew's forty-two years on the other.

The sequence of the four names—Joanna, Juda,

tongue discovered recently in the Sinai monastery, an older document, showing that the gap was afterwards filled in regardless of the fact that this patch in the tender fabric tears asunder the series of fourteen to which the original writer had attached importance.

Joseph, Semei—in the section from the captivity to Jesus, in view of the very similar sequence—Jonan, Joseph, Juda, Simeon—in the portion from David to the captivity between three and four centuries later, is remarkable to say the least.

It is also a very strange circumstance that the only two names in which these lists come together for a time should happen to be those of well-known historical characters—Salathiel and Zorobabel, the latter the famous reconstructor of the Temple—which are on two occasions given in the book of Ezra (iii., 2-8, and v., 2). From that time nothing is to be extracted from the Hebrew scriptures, the compilers having to trust to their own resources, and thenceforth having no name in common.

Thus the two genealogies are strangely unlike, not only in the numbers of ancestors allotted to the whole period from David to Jesus, but also in the names given, even including that of the father of Joseph, the last on the list, which striking discordance did not escape serious notice even in ancient times, an ingenious attempt to clear it away on the part of Augustine and others having the additional merit, if it stands the test of examination, of explaining in a plausible manner the dissimilarity of the remainder of the lists.

In the first place it was suggested that an old Hebrew custom by which the brother of one who though married had died without heirs should marry the widow and so continue the race might solve the apparent contradiction.

It was said that Joseph, Mary's husband, was probably the son of a woman who had first married Heli, and, on his death without issue, married Jacob, his brother, whose child was Joseph.

Unfortunately it was soon discovered that as the paternal grandfather of Joseph would be the same in both cases, as, of course, all the other names in the line backwards to David, this scheme failed to solve the difficulty of their complete unlikeness, so a modification was suggested by which the two brothers concerned were but half-brothers, sons of the same mother, but by different fathers !

Yet, even with this complex arrangement, the discrepancies are not all removed, for it will be observed that at a much earlier period Salathiel (who is found in both lists) is registered as the son of Jechonias in Matthew, but of Neri in Luke ; so that the two fathers, as in the case last cited, can only be brothers on the side of the mother, who must, therefore, have twice married, the fathers of her two sons being respectively Josias and Melchi !

However, it is absolutely certain that there could only have been *one* official method of reckoning descent of the first-born in cases of Levirate marriage—there can be little doubt that the legal, not the actual, progenitor was registered ;* at any rate either brother at haphazard would not be inscribed, which must have been the case twice

* And it shall be that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name may not be put out of Israel (Deut. xxv., 6).

over if the extravagant explanation given above is to avail.

Of course, after all, it cannot be said that the circumstance of such strange and complicated marriages in two succeeding generations taking place *twice over* in the course of this pedigree, and one of the two writers in each case wrongly recording it, is absolutely impossible, and the explanation, such as it is, none other being available, has had to be accepted by those who assert the trustworthiness of these documents.

In later times the attempt to discover some mode of reconciliation between these two series of names so impracticably unlike, led to quite another mode of interpreting them. It is known that the dignity of the mother of Jesus grew rapidly during the first centuries; at first Luke's statement of her cousinship to Elizabeth of the house of Aaron caused her to be represented as of a priestly family, but this was soon discarded in favour of the view that she was a lineal descendant of David.

Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Irenæus all hold this opinion, which is supported also by the apocryphal "Protevangelion of James," and "Gospel of the Infancy," works which, though otherwise worthless, are good evidence of the beliefs of their day.

The question has then been asked: "Might not one of these lists be Mary's pedigree, while the other is that of Joseph?" By such a scheme one of the most glaring difficulties, that due to the complete

unlikeness of the name given as of the father of Joseph, would be satisfactorily solved ; though it is obvious that the expedient of the Levirate marriage with half-brothers, both of David's line, of the mother of Salathiel has still to be retained.

But, to begin with, in reviewing this scheme, we find that both Matthew and Luke lay deliberate emphasis on the fact of Joseph's descent from David, while not a word can be adduced to show that either of them attributed a similar origin to Mary. In Matthew (i., 20) the angel says : "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife" ; and in Luke (i., 27), Gabriel is sent "to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David."

From these passages it is evident that both writers deliberately ignore Mary's alleged royal descent, when, had they known of it, allusion was almost thrust upon them by the narrative, for Joseph and Mary being both mentioned, the descent from David is pointedly attributed to Joseph alone.

But, even taking the internal evidence of the lists themselves, can either of them belong to Mary ?

It cannot be Matthew, whose words "and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary" put him out of court.

Luke remains, whose mode of expressing the relationship, viz., "which was the son of," the word "son" being alone expressed in the first link of the chain of ancestry, though of course understood afterwards in the passage according to the rules of gram-

matical construction, has enabled commentators to suggest that the word in the text does not in the Greek ($\tauοῦ$) necessarily mean sonship but may apply to the other relationships—son-in-law for example—in which case Joseph could be made out as son-in-law to Heli who was Mary's father. However, it will be seen that this interpretation is inadmissible, for the word $\tauοῦ$ being used throughout the entire pedigree, linking for instance the names of Jesse and David and also Salathiel and Zorobabel, not to mention all the earlier names taken from the Hebrew scriptures, it is clear that it means here the relationship of a son, and it is nothing less than an absurdity to give it a different meaning in a single, arbitrarily selected instance merely when convenient for dogmatic reasons.

But it is not until we come to the birth of Jesus that the gravest difficulty of all occurs. It will be observed that Matthew, in giving the last link in the pedigree, alters the phraseology he has employed throughout, and pointedly says, "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ"; while Luke equally uses a phrase different from that employed in all other cases, viz.: "Being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph."

In this manner both documents, in their present form, at the very last indirectly but with palpable intention deny the parentage of Jesus through Joseph, and, therefore, also the Davidic descent, which they seemed about to prove, besides flatly contradicting their own texts, for the genealogy of

Matthew begins thus, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David," and nothing can be more certain than that this introduction to the list proclaims it to be what the deliberate phrase employed at the very end in connecting Joseph with Jesus shows it is not; while in Luke (i., 32) Gabriel tells Mary that the Lord God shall give unto her son "the throne of his father David," and (i., 49) Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesies, saying, "The Lord God of Israel hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," both passages directly leading up to and asserting a descent from that king which the final term of the genealogy as clearly denies.*

If we contend that these documents are in their original state, neither altered nor falsified, we must believe that two writers, absolutely dissociated, inserted in their respective narratives by an extraordinary coincidence genealogical tables having no resemblance whatever one to the other, but possessing the same strange peculiarity of reversing all that had been implied before when the last link is arrived at.

If we reject this view as too absurd, the conclusion is inevitable that both documents have been fraudulently revised, while passages which refused to harmonise with the falsification have by carelessness been left unaltered.

* These flagrant self-contradictions did not escape notice even in the days of Augustine, whose defence is that it was necessary to carry the descent through Joseph on account of the superior dignity of the male sex !

That this is the true solution has long been recognised by impartial investigators, who, however, have been unable, after this vast lapse of time, to give actual proof of such a perversion of the text of either manuscript having taken place ; but the recent find of the "Sinai Palimpsest" has now in the most striking manner shown that those grave suspicions are well founded, for in this early version of the Gospels the passage from Matthew (i., 16) runs thus, "and *Joseph begat Jesus*, who is called Christ" *—a fact which is perfectly conclusive against the present reading, as found in the canonical Gospel, and makes the whole pedigree consistent and intelligible as a demonstration of Jesus's Davidical descent ; its original introduction into Matthew's text being no longer a puzzle.

* That this is not a mere copyist's error is shown by the omission of the words, "and knew her not" in i., 25, and by the use of the phrase, "shall bear to thee a son" instead of "shall bring forth a son" in i., 21, but with the inconsistency characteristic of the age, the version has the particulars in verses 18 and 20, which declare the generation by the Holy Spirit. A striking instance of the piecemeal development of dogma.

CHAPTER XII.

EXTERIOR EVIDENCE INCORPORATED IN MATTHEW'S NARRATIVE (THE PROPHECIES CLAIMED AS FULFILLED).

JEWISH METHODS OF SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION—THE PROPHETIC PASSAGES EXAMINED.

THERE now alone remain for consideration the five prophetic passages from the Hebrew scriptures introduced by Matthew as foretelling, and therefore confirming, incidents in his story, but to do this satisfactorily we must have before us the methods of scripture exposition prevalent among the Jews, and form an estimate of the amount of critical intelligence to be expected from the people in such a matter.

Language being merely the principal instrument by which the thought of the individual can be transmitted to his fellows through speaking or writing, must always lag behind the human needs of which it is the outcome; for a new word or an additional meaning to a word can never arise until the pressing necessity of the invention has been felt.

It is therefore obvious that the higher the social organisation, the greater the difficulty in finding

words that shall express all, and but all, that is in the mind of the speaker or writer.

That a single word shall have double or multiple meanings, solely to be distinguished by appeal to the context, is a result of this poverty of language, and the cause of countless misunderstandings, besides affording the screen under cover of which the dishonest disputant obtains shelter.

Many words are incapable of rigorous definition, for some of the words on which that definition depends will also be indefinite; and this imperfection is inevitable, for we can no more possess a separate word or symbol for every ultimate division of thought, than we can obtain a special name for each of the infinite shades of colour that dissolve one into the other in the solar spectrum.

This being so, no matter what the language, it is often impossible in explanation or discussion to choose words beyond and above misconception or misrepresentation.

The Greek language—highly developed as it became, and marvellous as is its range—has its share of this reproach, and the eulogy of Gibbon upon it, as “a language which gave a soul to the objects of sense, and a body to the abstractions of philosophy,” exactly marks the characteristic which renders it an untrustworthy vehicle for conveying rigid scientific truth, while stamping it as a splendid medium for the expression of poetic thought.*

* “This is to talk poetic metaphor” is the protest of the practical Aristotle when out of patience with some of Plato’s verbal subtleties.

But when we have to deal with a language structurally faulty and incomplete as is the Hebrew, without separate symbols for the vowels, with meagre syntax, in fact adapted merely to the needs of a primitive people, these difficulties are largely increased.

We find that the dialect of the Aramaic, the language of immigrants from the East who repeopled Samaria after the deportation of the northern tribes, was already gaining a footing in Judæa in the time of Hezekiah (*Isaiah xxxvi., 12*).

After the return from Babylon, where for two generations a similar dialect had been compulsorily in use, it would seem (*Nehemiah viii., 8*) that the ancient Hebrew scriptures already required translation for the populace. In Galilee, owing to its position between Samaria and Syria, the latter country speaking another variety of the Aramaic, this language soon gained the ascendancy.

Hebrew probably had died away throughout Palestine as a spoken idiom even among the cultured quite a century before Christ, though it has ever since been maintained as the language of literature by the national writers.

When we reflect on the manifold defects of the Hebrew language, the utter absence of methodical arrangement in the sacred books, and the Semitic taste for ultra-poetical symbolism, so bewildering, but

A large proportion of the arguments which have been advanced on the very subject we are considering is based on the extensions or limitations in meaning of Greek words.

apparently so impressive to the staid and relatively prosaic Western reader, it must be confessed that there would be immense scope for guesswork in exposition.

The Hebrew prophecies are without exception diffuse and vague, containing no indication of the epoch at which they will be fulfilled and capable of receiving all sorts of interpretations, experts in mysteries still following this quest.

The Messiah or anointed leader they foretold was in some passages to be the descendant of David, in some to be David himself, in others merely a prophet; now the advent of the Messiah was to take place after a reformation of the people, now that reform was to be his work; sometimes he was to reign over Israel, sometimes to rule the world.

It will therefore be admitted that the interpretation of the Pentateuch and the prophets demanded the services of men of special technical skill and training; and as it is indisputable that the character of the exposition will largely depend on the expositor, it will be as well to observe on whom in the Jewish State devolved the task or privilege of explaining them.

This we find, owing to the priesthood limiting their duties to the complex ceremonial and ritual observances commanded by the Mosaical code, had early drifted into the hands of quite another class, the Sopherim or Scribes, also often distinguished by the honorary titles of Rabbi or Rabboni. These though generally laymen, and originally often merely the

trained copyists of the sacred writings for the use of the synagogues, had by that employment acquired an intimate verbal knowledge of them.

It was also claimed by or for the Scribes that by their habit of minute accuracy in transcribing they had succeeded in bringing about an absolute verbal identity in all copies of the sacred books.*

It was acknowledged that no one could expound so certainly as he who had repeatedly studied word for word the text that might demand elucidation, hence the Scribe became the recognised expositor. Moreover, as secular law did not exist, and the injunctions and maxims attributed to Moses were made to govern all the affairs of life, it was the Scribe who certified the due performance of the rite of circumcision, and, acting in the capacity of the modern lawyer, framed the marriage settlement, wrote the bill of divorce, adjudicated differences, and drew up the testament for the probably illiterate Hebrew. Besides this he became the teacher of youth, with all the overwhelming influence attending that office.

But though scrupulously careful neither to add nor subtract "one jot or one tittle" in their copyings of the ancient writings, the Scribes could not fail to recognise that the simple and primitive regulations which sufficed for the needs of a semi-barbarous age could only be brought into reasonable accordance with the constantly increasing complexity

* This uniformity, however, could not have been attained till quite late in Asmonæan times, otherwise we would not have had Daniel in his present place in the canon.

of life, by making full use of the elasticity of the text so as to extend its meanings.

A system of exegesis by which it was claimed that from a certain phrase or even word of the sacred writer some conclusion, at first sight unrecognisable, could be inferentially but infallibly deduced, was therefore brought in, and by degrees carried to extreme lengths, owing to its obvious usefulness in making the archaic text the arbiter in matters quite unforeseen of old. The authoritative declaration that all these inferences—those known, and those yet to be discovered—were in the mind of the inspired writer, and were to be perceived by those only who devoted their lives to the task, inevitably produced in time a conviction on the part of the populace that the interpretation of Scripture was hopelessly beyond the capacity of the untrained.*

Thus the Scribes held exactly the same position as to pretension to a “gnosis,” or knowledge withheld from the vulgar, as was taken up later during the evolution of Christian dogma by the Gnostic sect.

For the Scribes at the time of Jesus, the words and sentences of the Pentateuch and prophetical books had become enigmas† in which might lurk

* It would only be in the synagogue that the average Israelite would ever see a roll of the law or prophets, and even supposing him capable of rightly comprehending them, the cost of a transcript would be, in those days, a sufficient obstacle to its possession; besides, we may be sure that the Rabbinical authorities would not encourage this private investigation.

† “Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Luke xi., 52).

a second recondite but important meaning to be laid bare by patience and skill. Nothing was too minute or apparently insignificant for their microscopic vision, sharpened by personal emulation and the hope of increased reputation, which could be best attained by the discovery of some new interpretation of the text or new corollary from it.

Side by side also with the theory of inherent double or multiple meanings was developed a still more bizarre exegesis, viz., the employment of a Chaldaean scheme of making use of the numerical values attaching to alphabetic letters to bring out hidden meanings from the text.

The absurd length to which this system was carried is illustrated by the passage, Numbers xii., 1, in which Moses is stated to have married an Ethiopian woman—an act which, being in most flagrant contravention of his own law, caused some difficulty.

However, as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were, besides their ordinary purpose, also used as symbols of numerals, it was possible to obtain different readings of passages by taking a word the sum of whose letters, when added together as figures, coincided with the sum given by the word they wished to expunge.

In the above case an expert discovered that the Hebrew word "Ethiopian" equalled in its numerical value when dissected the word "beautiful." He was thus able to announce as the real, though hidden, meaning, that Moses had married a *beautiful*

woman, which solved the difficulty to the satisfaction of all.*

That this variant rendered the context, in which the illegal marriage is protested against by Aaron and Miriam, utterly devoid of meaning did not disconcert them, for contradictions and inconsistencies were no obstacles to Hebrew expositors.

Yet another puzzle system reversed the letters from the beginning to the end of the alphabet so as to obtain new and desired readings. With all these varied means of manipulating the ancient text at his disposal, it will be agreed that it was in the power of the adept to make it mean almost anything at pleasure.

The intellectual training of the Rabbis consisting in the acquisition of dexterity in handling and adapting passages of Scripture which might be made to have at least a verbal connection with the matter under discussion, a remarkable lack of scruple underlay their disputations, if we may judge from the fragments extant, and the same comment applies to such dicta of theirs as have survived.

It is impossible to feel that truth was sought for by these keen dialecticians, among whom the victory always rests with him who is the readiest in quotations, the controversial weapons,† or is the most adroit in verbal quibbles.

* This remarkable example is given by Haurath from the *targum* or Chaldee paraphrase by Onkelos, probably dating from the first century of our era.

† The controversy between Jesus and Satan in the desert is represented as carried on wholly by passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, which both sides hold as binding.

The Christian doctors also in their desire to bend the stubborn archaic text to new meanings gladly followed the course indicated by the Scribes. Paul, owing to his upbringing among these casuists, is by no means free from the reproach of employing their vicious system and tracing similitudes in words—not things.

Barnabas, his colleague, skilled in the Scribes' methods, has in his "General Epistle," which is cited by Clement (of Alexandria), Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome (and held to be inspired by the two earlier writers), a most remarkable instance of this tendency, as follows (chapter viii., 10 ff) :

"Understand therefore, children, these things more fully, that Abraham, looking forward in the Spirit to Jesus, circumcised, having received the mystery of three letters.

"For the Scripture says that Abraham circumcised 318 men of his house.

"But what, therefore, was the mystery that was made known unto him?

"Mark first the 18 and then the 300, for the numeral letters of 10 and 8 are 'I.H.,' and these denote Jesus.

"And because the cross was that by which we were to find grace, therefore he adds 300, the note of which is T (the figure of his cross). Wherefore by two letters he signifies Jesus and by the third his cross.

"He who has put the engrafted gift of his doctrine within us knows that I never taught to any one a more certain truth; but I trust that ye are worthy of it."

Apart from the absurdity of the application of the passage, the pseudo-Barnabas is hopelessly wrong even as to his facts, for the incident of the circum-

cision happened many years after the armed rescue of Lot, so that the household could not be the same, and moreover on the latter occasion "all purchased from the stranger" were to be included in the rite. It is difficult to speak with patience of such supports to doctrine.

The employment of numerical figures to express words is found in "Revelation," that singular work which, by turns accepted and rejected by the Churches, at last by the blindest haphazard has found a permanent and honoured resting-place in the canon. In the imagery by which the author associates himself with the large number in Asia who in A.D. 69 still believed that Nero was not in fact dead but only wounded in Rome, and that he had escaped to the Parthians, at the head of whose hordes he would return to lay waste the Roman Empire, he, in his anxiety to name him as the beast and Antichrist, a wish tempered by the dread of the risks of so doing, brings in the use of numbers according to the Hebrew system. He thus says of "the beast that had a wound by a sword and did live"—here is wisdom—"Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred three score and six"; by which any Jewish expert could spell out "Neron Kasar" (Nero Cæsar), though it would be quite unintelligible to the Gentiles.

At a later date, Origen found in each passage of the sacred volume not only an open and direct

meaning which he confessed was not always sense, but also two others which he fancifully likened to the soul and spirit of man.

If the direct meaning was obscure, contradictory, or unfavourable, he could thus ignore or remodel it without difficulty, and this system of exegesis, owing to its manifest convenience, became universal.

We have now to glance at what is known of the habits of thought and degree of critical intelligence to be found among the Jewish people, the pupils of the Scribes, and therefore among the Hebrew proselytes for whom Matthew's history was written, and to whom alone such extracts from their national books would legitimately appeal.

According to the definite belief of the time, even among the leaders of the nation, if we except the numerically inconsiderable sect of the Sadducees, the number of the angels was virtually infinite; for besides one being allotted to each human being, even the smallest herb had its angel guardian, while special spirits governed all the phenomena of nature.

But though angels were innumerable, so, unfortunately, were devils.

The demons, it was almost universally agreed among the Jews, as well as among the early Christians (Justin and Tertullian for example), were the offspring of the fallen angels by the daughters of men. The air was full of them, nor were even the depths of the sea free from these pests; it was believed that they blighted the plant and inflicted

disease on the animal, while their power to possess and torture the human race was to be seen and proved every day in the person of the unfortunate epileptic or sufferer from unexplained sickness.

There was nothing, if we except the names, to distinguish this extravagant host of spirits from the Dryads, Hamadryads, Lares, Penates, *δαιμόνια*, genii, &c., &c., of the pagans, though in their case, save by the proletaire or the rustic, those names had become mere poetical impersonations of the objects and forces of nature.

Names among the Hebrews were of extreme importance.

The real name of Jehovah, a complicated structure of anagrams and word-manipulation, only known to the advanced adept, and not to be lightly pronounced, was the most powerful talisman. It was also expedient to know the *real* names of angels and demons, as if uttered correctly those spiritual beings would obey the summons. The Essenes, according to Josephus, bound their neophytes by terrible oaths not to divulge these secret but useful designations.

This was but an amplification of the principle found in the sacred writings, wherein great importance is attached to the exact names to be given to human beings; Abraham, Sarah, Ishmael, and Isaac, for example, being all directly named by Jehovah himself.

Even in the narrative of the nativity that has just been reviewed the names of both John and Jesus are expressly dictated from above, and are consequently

of moment ; it being the accepted belief that the name governed the character and career of the recipient.

Numbers were sacred or the reverse—7 with its multiples was very early a sacred number, probably from its coinciding with the observed lunar phases ; we have already found in Matthew an instance where 7×2 is dragged into the genealogical list in spite of its causing a defect in the enumeration ; 3 was always a sacred number, examples being too numerous to quote, as also was 10 with its multiples.

Mystic numbers were discovered by the skilled Cabalist (as the adept in secret doctrine was termed), which, when judiciously dealt with, could control the elements, heal the sick, and expel demons. The educated Josephus fully shares this national belief.

That the early Hebrews recognised the reality of magic and divination, though deeming them unlawful,* is clearly shown by the wonders represented as actually wrought in Egypt by the magicians ; but, though there is an allusion to the prevalence of astrology in Babylon in Isaiah (xlvii., 13), a passage written during the captivity, and not long before the destruction of that empire by Cyrus, it is not until much later, in Daniel (v., 11, 12), a work of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, that we find the legitimacy of that pseudo-science authoritatively acknowledged.

In this passage Daniel, an exemplary Hebrew,

* Deut. (xviii., 10-12) gives a prohibition of these practices.

is yet a skilled adept in the three secret arts of astrology, magic, and divination, which from this time forth became acclimatised in Palestine, and were extensively practised.

It is impossible, in a small space, even to enumerate the further superstitions with which the daily life of the Israelite was crowded ; the so-called educated classes being equally with the populace under their influence.

Though the canonical gospels are for the greater part free from these special forms of credulity, we cannot fail to notice the conspicuous incident of the Magi's visit told in Matthew's prologue, and to remark that the truth of the science which brought them to Judæa is not questioned—indeed quite the reverse—for they are supposed to be by it truly and exclusively informed as to the birth of the Redeemer of the human race. That demons held possession of men may be found as an accepted fact in the synoptic Gospels ; but though the angelology, &c., of the early Christian fathers was as complete as that of the Rabbis, they did not recognise the lawfulness of magic and divination, while having no doubt whatever of their efficacy. The apocryphal "Protevangelion of James" has an instance of the employment of divination just before our era, when the priests by a magic charm test the innocence of Joseph ; in the same work there is a divination by rods by means of which Joseph is selected as the husband of the virgin.

We find sorcery and soothsaying quite acknow-

ledged as effective in the Acts, and what is more remarkable, Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons have power to cast out devils and heal diseases, an early instance of the belief in the influence of relics that later was to have such important developments.

As it must be admitted that superstition in some form or other was universal in the ancient world, it may be asked, why we show respect for the intellectual powers of the Greeks and the practical sagacity of the Romans in spite of the extravagance of their mythologies; but to this it must be answered that we do not take either race seriously in matters of religion, which had in neither instance a dominant control over the social and political life, as was the case in Judæa.

Among the Greeks the philosophical systems had reduced to the proportions of a shadowy allegory the whole range of the Olympian deities and their subordinates, while in Rome, even under the republic, Cato can wonder how one haruspex can meet another without laughing, and the augur can on the appointment of a magistrate at once hear, though unheard by all others, the propitious thunder on the left which gave Jove's sanction to the choice.

Magic, legally forbidden, was only practised surreptitiously by foreigners—Asiatics, Jews, and Egyptians—till some more than usually outrageous scandal caused for the time its summary suppression.

In the time of Augustus the eclecticism of the cultured classes took the form of a deferential but cold formalism towards the State religion, and though

it is true that more than a century later there was a sort of religious revival, this had no popular foundation, being only promoted and fostered by Imperial policy as a state engine, galvanising into a momentary semblance of vitality the dying faith.

The Hebrew literature of the period, and for centuries after, is full of the most grotesque doings of angels and demons, the much read book of Enoch being an extraordinary instance. The learned Hebraist, Lightfoot, gives a vigorous picture of this degraded belief, where the unity of Jehovah is lost sight of in the multitude of his agents, and adds that the nation after the return from Babylon "was given to magical arts beyond measure," and that "there was not a people on earth that studied or attributed more to dreams than they, or were more fond of amulets, charms, mutterings, exorcisms, and all kinds of enchantments."

We may add that the fathers of the Christian Church show by their extant writings that they were in no way emancipated from the prejudices of the time.

We have found a credulous and uncultured people bound in rigorous and life-long fetters by a code of ever increasing severity, and at the mercy of untrustworthy exponents of their own Scriptures, and have now to examine the excerpts from the prophetic writings that are brought forward by Matthew as applicable to Jesus.

The question will afterwards arise, Was the writer superior to the prejudices and free from the false

systems of the time, or was he merely a purblind follower in the well-trodden path of the Rabbis?

The prophecy quoted in Matthew's text (i., 23) as foretelling the birth of Jesus of a virgin, is there worded (revised version),

“Behold the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.”

As it is impossible to disconnect this carefully selected portion of a single sentence from the remainder and from the incidents and prophecies with which it is linked in the book of Isaiah, some examination of the context is necessary, as also a slight review of certain events of the period that will be seen to be clearly referred to when the prediction is taken as a whole; our authorities being 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Josephus.

Ahaz, a youth of twenty, came to the throne of Judæa (about B.C. 741) in a time of great national peril, for the empire of Assyria, which during a long period of decline, following on the brilliant epoch of Shalmaneser II., had been despoiled of all its Syrian possessions, had been then for some years again growing in strength, and was now under a powerful king—Tiglath Pileser III.—who aimed at recovering all the lost territory and influence.

Ahaz, however, had to deal with another difficulty nearer home; an alliance between Rezin, the King of Syria, and Pekah, king of the dissevered northern section of his race, led to an invasion of Judæa and the siege of Jerusalem, though that fortress success-

fully resisted them. We are told that the Syrians then went home, but that Ahaz, matching himself against Pekah, was badly beaten.

In consequence of these disasters, Ahaz appealed for help to Tiglath Pileser, offering tribute, and the Assyrian king, probably nothing loth, attacked Syria, taking Damascus, whose inhabitants he transported to Media, filling their place with an Assyrian colony : he then proceeded to the Israelitish kingdom, which he overran, carrying off many prisoners.

Ahaz had now to perform his part of the compact, by collecting all gold and treasure, even from the Temple, thus still further impoverishing his harassed kingdom, and deeply offending the priesthood, his future chroniclers.

He died early, after a troubled reign of sixteen years.

A few years later, in the reign of his son Hezekiah, Shalmanceser IV., who then ruled Assyria, made another incursion on the northern Israelitish kingdom, forcing it to become tributary, and shortly afterwards detecting an intrigue there with the rival power Egypt, besieged Samaria, which was captured three years later by Sargon, who had in the interval come to the throne, and who deported king and inhabitants to Persia (B.C. 722), repeopling the country from that region.

Hezekiah in Judæa had meanwhile discontinued the tribute, probably counting on the many home preoccupations that at that time beset the Assyrians, and on the support of Egypt ; but his turn came

when, the Assyrian succession settled and the Egyptian forces defeated near Ekron, in the coast region, he had to pay heavily to induce Sennacherib, Sargon's son, to retire from Jerusalem after he had ravaged the country (about B.C. 715).

Isaiah, chapter vii., in its commencement takes the form of annals. The prophet then announces to King Ahaz the birth of a child of a virgin which is to be a sign from Jehovah to reassure him as to his apparent peril from his northern neighbours, who were then threatening Jerusalem, and adds, "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good (*i.e.*, in the course of a year or two) the land whose two kings thou abhorrest (Israel and Syria) shall be forsaken" (*i.e.*, by Pekah and Rezin).*

But in the next chapter (viii.) the prophet visits "the prophetess"—apparently his wife—and she bears a son who, by Jehovah's command, is named Maher-shahal-hash-baz,† it being added "Before the child shall have knowledge to cry my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria."

Thus the subjects of these two predictions are identical, and it can hardly be seriously maintained that the two incidents of births can refer to two separate children, constant iteration being so marked

* Rezin is killed, and Pekah would of course be a fugitive when his land was overrun by the Assyrians.

† Interpreted to mean "swift spoil—speedy prey"—a clear allusion to the prophesied overthrow of the king's enemies.

a feature of Hebrew style,* and yet, if Matthew's claim as to applicability to Jesus is to be defended at all, they *must* be separated, as the birth of the second infant is distinctly natural.

In other respects neither infant is a type of Jesus, for the predicted events are to happen and do happen while both of them are in their infancy—in the one case the removal of the two hostile kings, in the other the plunder of Damascus and Samaria, merely different phases of the same catastrophe. There is no analogue in the history of Palestine at the time of the nativity.

The child Immanuel is to eat of the soured milk and wild honey (the ordinary food of the nomad Arab), which the prophet in his involved metaphorical manner dwells upon as alone available at the time, for verses 15 and 21 to 25 of Chap. vii. may be put into plainer language as implying that Judæa would be denuded and laid waste, arable land going out of cultivation, and vineyards broken up through the ravages of the *Assyrians*, who, in the context, are directly named.

But as the fulfilment of the prophecy as to Pekah and Rezin was to take place in less than two years, the introduction of the laying waste of the land is out of place, for thorns cannot so soon take the place of vines, nor rough grazing land of

* The passage from Zechariah (ix. 9), which gives the words "riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," is treated by Matthew (xxi., 2 ff) as though two animals were concerned, though it is merely a rhetorical duplication such as is common to Semitic style.

tilled fields: the common food of the people cannot therefore at that time have been what is represented.

Moreover, the Assyrians are the ravagers, to whom in Ahaz's time tribute was peacefully paid and allegiance acknowledged; it being perhaps twenty years later under Hezekiah that Assyria on that King's discontinuance of tribute harried the land of Judah.

This being so, it has been generally recognised that both these passages are parts of another prophecy altogether, but by the carelessness or ignorance of the collector of these scattered predictions have been misplaced in the text and improperly blended with the one we are dealing with.

But even if, in spite of this inconsistency, we choose to treat these passages as properly belonging to their present context, we cannot conciliate their incidents with those of the nativity; the land was then at peace, there were no men with bows and arrows who could intrude, thorns did not usurp the place of vines, and we are told by Josephus that careful culture was then so universal that the smaller stock was not reared.

The *mise-en-scène* is hopelessly incorrect in every detail.

There is no record of Jesus being called or known by the name Immanuel—we are told, on the contrary, that he was named Jesus by the angel's direct instructions both to Joseph and Mary. The parallel is thus narrowed to the single circumstance

that one of the two infants (if there were two) is alleged to be born without earthly father, and on this point it is a remarkable fact that the countrymen of the prophet make the distinct charge that a false translation has been introduced into our version, which, if it exists, sweeps away any such similitude.

The Rabbis declared from the first, in Justin's time, that the Hebrew word rendered as "virgin" (*i.e.*, $\pi\alpha\rho\theta\acute{e}v\os$) in the Septuagint or Greek translation which our version has followed, has in the original text simply the sense of "young woman"—in the Greek $\nu\acute{e}r\acute{a}v\is$.

This declaration Irenæus (about A.D. 180) felt it needful to combat, and writes: "God became man, and the Lord himself saved us, giving us the sign of the Virgin. But not as some say that now presume to interpret the Scriptures: 'Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,' as Theodotion of Ephesus and Aquila of Pontus have translated, both of them Jewish proselytes, following whom the Ebionites assert that Jesus was begotten of Joseph."

In the desire to apply this prophecy as to the virgin, with the consequent necessity of supporting the authority of the Septuagint translation which contains it, Irenæus then gives a preposterous story how the seventy Jewish elders commissioned by Ptolemy Philadelphus to execute this work for his library (B.C. 273) were shut up in separate cells during the operation, their productions on subsequent

comparison being found to be absolutely and verbally coincident throughout,—and concludes, “so that the Gentiles present knew that the Scriptures were translated by a divine inspiration” (Eusebius v., 8).

Setting aside its absurdity, this incident is not known either to Philo or to Josephus, to whom we are indebted for what we know of the production of the translation, and who were not at all likely to omit a marvellous circumstance which would have been so much to the credit of their people.*

If this consistently urged contention of the Jews in a matter concerning their own language be well founded, and it is supported besides by the weighty authority of Gesenius, the last faint trace of the parallel disappears.†

Thus, the primary and obvious sense of the passage of Isaiah being related to events of the same epoch, we have to fall back upon a secondary, occult meaning, supposed to exist in a few words extracted from a single sentence, while deliberately rejecting the context—precisely the method of the Scribes—and the interpretation of the very word on which the whole claim of its reference to the birth of Jesus rests has been protested against for ages by those who by their nationality should be most qualified to decide, as well as by highly competent modern scholars.

* The nominally contemporary account by Aristeas is not made use of here, though it flatly contradicts Irenæus's story, it being probably either spurious or extensively interpolated.

† The recent translation of Isaiah by the Rev. T. K. Cheyne has also “young woman” in this passage.

The prophecy of Micah introduced by Matthew (ii., 6), as predicting the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, is there given in these words (revised version): "And thou Bethlehem the land of Judah art in no wise least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come forth a Governor which shall be shepherd of my people Israel."

The actual text and context are now given (Micah v., 1, 2, 3).

"Now shalt thou gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops, he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

"But thou Bethlehem Ephratha, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

"Therefore will he give them up until the time that she which travaleth hath brought forth, then the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." *

It will be observed that the quotation is not strictly accurate: in Micah the comparative insignificance of the town is made a point of, which is altogether changed in Matthew's version.

As it was generally recognised that the Messiah was to be David's descendant or even a second David, nothing was more natural than the expectation that he should be born at Bethlehem as David was; and it is somewhat singular that this passage

* Verses 1 and 3 of this passage are a remarkable illustration of the imperfection of the Hebrew language already referred to. It is impossible to extract a lucid meaning from the tangle of pronouns in both.

alone in the whole range of the Hebrew prophetic works gives expression to it. The leader spoken of was to unite the Jewish race and rule over it, which Jesus never did, that people after a lapse of nearly two thousand years still resisting his claim to the position of Messiah.

The only parallel, therefore, is that Jesus, according to Matthew (and Luke), was born at Bethlehem, and it is precisely this circumstance which is not clearly demonstrable, it having been already shown what grave difficulties lie in the way of accepting the statement as historical, while it cannot be overlooked that there was a distinct dogmatic inducement to place the nativity in that village.

The passage claimed (ii., 15) to be a prediction of Jesus's return after a sojourn in Egypt is given by Matthew as follows: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord through the prophet—saying, Out of Egypt did I call my Son."

The real words of Hosea (xi., 1), however, are, "When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt."

Hosea—probably a Samaritan—wrote when the break-up of the northern Jewish Kingdom was imminent, and when it demanded no great exercise of prophetic clear-sightedness to foresee that the steady approach of Assyria and the inability of its rival Egypt to protect its allies would inevitably before long bring matters to a crisis, even if a great part of the predictions were not made after the irruption under Tiglath Pileser already referred to,

when a large number of the Samaritans had been deported beyond the Euphrates.

It is with this northern section of the Jewish people that Hosea almost exclusively concerns himself: the references to Egypt are incessant throughout the work, but only one of these is selected and improperly torn from its context by Matthew, who even suppresses the most important part of the sentence, viz., "when *Israel* was a child,"* as it would betray the original meaning, which is moreover shown by verse 5, "He shall not return unto the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his King."

Thus the method of exposition is precisely that of the Scribes.

Matthew (ii., 18) says of the massacre at Bethlehem, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying,—In Ramah a voice was heard, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted because they are not."

The quotation, with its context, is found in Jeremiah xxxi., 15, 16, 17, as follows:—

"Thus saith the Lord, A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children because they are not.

"Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded,

* "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born" (Exodus iv., 22).

saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thy latter end, saith the Lord, and thy children shall come again to their own border."

This passage refers unequivocally to the captivity of *Benjamites*, and there is no massacre, for their return is distinctly promised to their own border; it is only a perverse ingenuity that can construct anything else out of it.

That Ramah lies some distance north of Jerusalem,* while Bethlehem is situated to the south of it, has not disconcerted the discoverer of this parallel; but the most conclusive discrepancy is that Rachel was the ancestress of the tribe of Benjamin, and in the prophet's text she is appropriately though figuratively represented as lamenting the fate of her descendants carried into captivity; while it was Leah, not Rachel, who was the mother of Judah, it being *her* descendants who are represented by Matthew as foully murdered at Bethlehem hundreds of years later.†

* Ramah was a city of Benjamin (Joshua xviii., 25).

† It is not incumbent on us to explain how Matthew could have made this blunder, but the following facts may throw light upon its cause :

In two separate passages of Genesis (xxxv., 19, and xlviij., 7), each telling of Rachel's death and burial at Ephrath, the identity of that place with Bethlehem is emphatically, but to appearance quite needlessly, asserted—thus, “Ephrath (the same is Beth-lehem)”; purely topographical comments which have been judged by experts to be late interpolations or marginal glosses which have found their way into the text.

On the other hand, Samuel (in 1 Samuel x., 2), speaking to Saul, a Benjamite, refers to “Rachel's sepulchre in the borders of Benjamin

In speaking of Jesus's residence at Nazareth, Matthew (ii., 23) comments "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets that he should be called a Nazarene."

No such sentence, nor any with likeness to it, can be found in the whole of the Jewish Scriptures,

at Zelzah," which place is identified with the Benjamite town Zelah named in the list in Joshua (xviii., 28). Also, in the actual passage quoted by Matthew (Jeremiah xxxi., 15) Rachel's voice is, figuratively, heard from her tomb at Ramah, a city on the *north* borders of Benjamin (Joshua xviii., 25).

In Ruth (iv., 11) the elders are represented as saying to Boaz, the great-grandfather of David : "The Lord make the woman (Ruth) that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel, and do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Beth-lehem."

Rachel and Leah are here introduced as founders of the southern tribes, Ephrathah and Bethlehem being given as the two typical tribal cities (not one place, or there is no meaning in the prevision), for they forecast that, through the offspring of Ruth, the tribes will be assimilated.

It is a significant fact that the one solitary case, other than the Genesis glosses, in which these two separate names are blended as synonymous, is to be found in Micah v., 2, just reviewed, which *must* have been before Matthew's eyes at the time of writing.

Whether the words of Micah generated the glosses in Genesis or the reverse is unimportant, also what could be the motive of their introduction.

They may have been inserted merely to give increased dignity to Bethlehem, then venerated as David's birth-place.

Is it credible that when the tribal delimitation took place (Joshua xviii., 11 ff) the grave of the mother of Benjamin should be allotted to another tribe, which would be, if at Bethlehem, less than four miles outside the boundary fixed, which passed by the Hinnom valley just south of Jebusi or Jerusalem?

No one cognisant of Semitic sentiments and prejudices could credit it.

The insignificant building just outside Bethlehem, now shown to tourists as the tomb of Rachel, is of no such antiquity ; yet the legend is well established among Christians and Moslems alike.

canonical or apocryphal, and the quotation has, therefore, been a *crux* to commentators, especially as Matthew's vague reference is merely to "the prophets."

The simplest suggestion that can be made is that Matthew misunderstood the passages, Judges xiii., 5, and 1 Saml. i., 2, which refer to the cases of Samson and Samuel respectively, both of whom are dedicated to the Lord by their mothers with the *Nazarite* vow, their hair remaining unshorn; a widely different thing from the word "Nazarene," or inhabitant of the town of Nazareth.

Another explanation has been hazarded, *i.e.*, that where the expected Messiah (Isaiah xi., 1) is pronounced a shoot or twig—"nezer"—of David's stock, this word was misunderstood by Matthew and made use of in quite a wrong sense.

The alleged quotation, the non-existence of which would be difficult of demonstration in days when the Hebrew Scriptures were in the hands of a few and in an obsolete dialect, would be helpful to explain to converts the puzzling anomaly that Jesus had obtained the universal reputation during his life and afterwards of being a Nazarene in spite of the assurance given to them that he was actually born at Bethlehem.

After this review of the passages of Scripture made use of by Matthew, it is plain that his method is exactly that of the exegetes around him: there is the same unscrupulous disregard for the context while extracting from the mass minute and selected

quotations, the same suggestion of an inner occult meaning: sometimes there is even a mere perversion of the plain sense of words as in the Nazarite-Nazarene sentence.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMPARISON OF MATTHEW AND LUKE.

THE historical occurrences found in Matthew's and Luke's stories, viewed as independent works, having now been examined, it is finally desirable to bring together these two documents so as to observe how far they are capable, by combination, of affording mutual support. In doing this, even in the most cursory manner, we cannot fail to notice the following remarkable facts.

First, that, taking Matthew's text—the visit of the Magi, the massacre by Herod, the flight into Egypt, and the return to a new home at Nazareth—of all this (the whole history) there is not a trace to be found in Luke.

Then, that taking Luke's text—the journey of Mary to Judæa, in the company of her husband, under the pressure of a Roman edict; the consequent birth of Jesus in a stable, afterwards the presentation in the Temple at the legal period, and the return thence of the family to their own city Nazareth—of all this, literally the whole of the story, we have not the faintest, most indirect reflex in Matthew.

How then can we institute a comparison when there is nothing to compare?

Can it be that the later writer (it is no matter which is selected for the purpose of this argument) has studiously and successfully planned that his version should not in one single instance trench a hair's-breadth upon what has been said before, being content to interpolate, or we may say interleave, incidents which he judged of moment, though untouched by the earlier chronicler, and that in this manner we obtain two histories which, though in no single particular agreeing, may possibly be found capable of conciliation, in so far that the details of the one may be made to supply the lacunæ of the other, and by judicious blending a consistent whole may be evolved.

We have at last to test, in the case of certain incidents recorded by each, the possibility of a scheme of agreement on this, the sole practicable basis.

Where was situated the home of Joseph and Mary when they married? This might seem at first sight a small matter, but it is, on the contrary, vital to the credit of either story.

Luke definitely calls Nazareth "their own city"; the subsequent visit to Bethlehem, in another province, being under compulsion on account of the census. The passage running thus: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into the city of David, which is called Bethlehem." Nothing can be more explicit than these words.

Moreover, the birth at Bethlehem takes place in a stable, such an untoward incident being of course

quite incompatible with a residence in the town, and almost impossible if either husband or wife had any relatives or even friends living there.

Matthew, on the other hand, implies that the family lived in Judæa, for when the return from Egypt takes place the passage runs: "But when he (Joseph) heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judæa in the room of his father Herod he was afraid to go thither, and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth."

This must mean, if there is any meaning in words, that Joseph was fully proposing to go back to a home in Judæa, but was warned of the danger of doing so, and that the city of Nazareth was but a divinely-appointed asylum when Archelaus's province was denied to him.

Our two authorities are thus in flagrant disagreement on this point; if we follow *Matthew* here, *Luke's* account of the journey to Judæa is indefensible along with all its results, while if we credit *Luke* we have no choice but to reject *Matthew's* story of the intention of Joseph to remain in Judæa on the return from Egypt.

Yet Dr. Farrar can say (Enc. Brit.: "Jesus," p. 660):—

"The circumstances of the nativity are only related by St. Matthew and St. Luke, and by each of them in a manner so absolutely independent that facts known to the one may have been unknown to the other. There is no difficulty in reconciling their fragmentary intimations if we

suppose that Nazareth was the native place of Joseph and Mary, and that there the coming nativity was announced to the Virgin, but that the exigencies of the enrolment undertaken by Quirinius for imperial purposes required Joseph to register his name at Bethlehem, the native town of David, from whom both he and probably his espoused wife were descended."

It will be seen that it is only by absolutely ignoring Matthew's distinct statement, that Dr. Farrar is able to declare that there is "no difficulty" in the matter; a short and easy method.

Of the two recorded occurrences, the visit of the Magi (Matthew) and the Temple presentation (Luke), if both are true one must have preceded the other in order of time. But which?

First: If we say that the Magi's visit to Bethlehem occurred at a later date than the Temple presentation, we have the following insuperable difficulties.

Luke, in telling of the Temple visit and its incidents with the prophecy of Simeon, continues thus (ii., 38, 39):—

"And she (Anna) coming up at that very hour gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all those that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had accomplished all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."

It would surely be an insult to our intelligence to be told that this passage, in which the action is so clearly continuous, must be cut asunder, and in the middle of its last sentence are to be inserted—a

return to *Bethlehem*, the Magi's visit,* the flight into Egypt, and the circuitous return many months afterwards with the intention of remaining in Judæa!

That after a more than forty days' sojourn the census formalities incident on a single family should be incomplete is quite inadmissible, there would therefore be no easily suggestible motive for a return to the south after the Temple ceremonial.

We can understand their remaining in the vicinity till this had been carried out: but on its accomplishment nothing is more natural than that they should, as *Luke* expressly says they did, depart home to their own city.

And it must not be overlooked that if we give up the return to Nazareth after the purification ceremony, we at the same time virtually reject Luke's earlier explicit statements with which it is in clear agreement, that the family lived in that Galilean town, that the angel appeared to the Virgin there, that she journeyed from thence to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and that it was only under compulsion that they made the journey to Bethlehem, where, having no home, they were, failing admittance at the inn, forced to take shelter in a stable.

Second. Nor do we mend the matter if we make the Magi's visit—it could only be by a few days—precede the Temple presentation.

Now this view implies that while Herod, as we

* The later the date at which the Magi's visit is placed, the deeper the contradiction with Luke that Jesus should still be found at Bethlehem.

learn from *Luke*, in obedience to the commands of Augustus is carrying out through his officials an elaborate personal inquisition throughout Judæa, he is at the same time, according to *Matthew*, occupied close to his capital in slaughtering the infant children of his own peaceful subjects who had just been registered, in a manner so ill-contrived for its alleged purpose as to be explained only by sheer insanity. For apart from the fact that the visit of wealthy foreigners with their presentation of costly gifts to a lowly child a few days before would be the talk of the whole of an eastern village, all Bethlehem would know also of the wonders just made known by the shepherds, so that any emissary of the king could not fail to learn from the first person accosted there all the particulars respecting the babe with these Messianic claims.

Moreover, in thus placing the sequence of the two incidents, we have to deal with the following difficulties. It shows not only that the Magi deliberately and most infamously suppressed the fact that they had a mission of inquiry from Herod, to whom they were expected to report, which alone would have deterred any sane Israelite from visiting the capital, but renders it certain that the subsequent divine intimation that ensured their own safety was also by them shamefully kept secret from the family yet more deeply interested than themselves.

Thus the family, in default of any hint of their deadly peril, and in the absence of a protecting revelation such as the undeserving Magi have been

favoured with, actually enter Jerusalem, then in ferment on the question of the birth of a Messiah, Herod all the time waiting with impatience for intelligence from their village five miles away! They there perform the prescribed Temple ceremonies, during which the Messiahship of the babe is recognised by two persons and announced to many others, thence returning to Bethlehem, from which place they are ultimately hurried, on the reception of the singularly delayed divine warning.*

That in thus visiting the capital they learned nothing of the popular excitement on the very subject of the Messiahship, the holding of which dignity by their infant had been separately revealed to each of them, is sufficiently surprising, but that neither Simeon nor Anna, habitual frequenters of the Temple, should have had any knowledge whatever of Herod's ill-omened inquiries of the Sanhedrim only a few days before, of the despatch of the Magi, and of the emotion of the populace with reference to that Messiahship concerning which they made such open declarations, is absolutely incredible.

But we have already seen that this Temple visit could only have been hazarded owing to want of knowledge as to Herod's schemes, due to disgraceful reticence in two separate matters on the part of the Magi.

Now these Magi are actuated by the deepest

* It is obvious that the presentation could not have taken place on the return journey from Egypt, for Joseph is then commanded to avoid Judæa.

feelings of spiritual reverence, and indeed adoration, no other motives for their visit being conceivable, and it is distinctly impossible, under these circumstances, that they could have combined to suppress facts so palpably dominant to the welfare of the babe they worshipped.

Thus we are thrown back on our first and already rejected hypothesis, with its flat contradiction to Luke, the result being that in whichever order we place the two occurrences they refuse to assimilate.

In early Christian literature we find two instances of attempts at the blending of Matthew's and Luke's stories; the first is contained in the "Protevangelion of James," which must have enjoyed some amount of credit, as it is now and then referred to by the Fathers.

In this, Mary, who has been brought up in the Temple amidst a variety of extraordinary incidents unnecessary to repeat here, is affianced to Joseph—an old man. She then makes the visit to her cousin—some of Luke's phrases being most inappropriately appropriated—and on her return Joseph, who has been building houses abroad, also comes back and discovers her secret, the angel then (as in Matthew) reassuring him.

We now abruptly return to Luke's version, but here the very limited census applies to "all the Jews that were of Bethlehem in Judæa," Mary in consequence being taken to that village, where Jesus is born in a cave to the accompaniment of a universal paralysis of nature,—clouds, birds, sheep,

shepherds, &c., &c., all remaining motionless in the position in which the event found them, with a variety of other extravagant marvels, too lengthy to repeat or even to epitomise here.

Again the scene shifts to Matthew, for the “wise men” appear, but Mary, “hearing that the children were to be killed,” lays the babe in an ox-manger (Luke), while Elizabeth finds a far better shelter for her child and herself in the interior of a mountain which opens to receive them (p. 93).

The variant contained in another of these productions, the “Gospel of the Infancy,” is briefly as follows :

Augustus having published a decree “that all persons should go to be taxed in their own country,” Joseph and Mary in consequence journey to Bethlehem, taking refuge in a cave, where, surrounded by puerile wonders, Jesus is born, and in the cradle addresses his mother thus: “Mary, I am Jesus, the Son of God, that Word which thou didst bring forth, according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to thee, and my Father hath sent me for the salvation of the world.”

At the presentation in the Temple, Simeon sees Jesus “shining as a pillar of light, with the angels standing round him as the guards of a king,” and utters a song of praise.

So far we have had what has been a travesty of Luke’s narrative, but, in the attempt to combine, the author now lays Matthew under contribution ; for the “wise men” come, present their costly gifts, and

depart. Herod contrives the murder of Jesus, on which Joseph, warned, takes the family to Egypt, where, and subsequently in Palestine on their return, a series of the most absurd marvels ever grouped together takes place, Jesus, moreover, making the acquaintance of the two thieves afterwards crucified with him.

Such are the two ancient attempts to harmonise Matthew's and Luke's histories, typical examples of the accretions of childish fable supplied to the faithful, which finally reached the inexpressibly repulsive developments of the "Gospel of Thomas."

It is a waste of time to test them by criticism.

Though we may recognise the impossibility of reconciling some of these incidents as told by Matthew and Luke, either as to time, place, or fact, there remains a yet more extraordinary divergency, *i.e.*, in the general tendency of the narratives.

In Luke we have from first to last a picture of idyllic calm—no threat of repudiation hangs over the Virgin, the angels give their glad tidings, and Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Mary are moved to utter songs of poetic rapture in their thanksgivings. Even in the incident of the compulsory journey nothing mars the tranquillity of the scene; the babe is born, the angelic choir proclaim peace and goodwill, while the shepherds joyfully praise God for his great goodness to the human race.

The child at the appointed time of his mother's purification is presented in the Temple; nothing untoward occurs, and the venerable Simeon and

Anna publicly praise God that they have been permitted to see the Saviour, while Anna proclaims him to those in Jerusalem who are of like hopes with herself.

Finally, having accomplished the legal rites, the family return peacefully to their Galilean home.

If we compare with this picture that presented in the first Gospel we are at once struck by its absolute dissimilarity, for in Matthew we have nothing but difficulty and danger, the play of odious and malignant passions, wearisome journeys and exile, while one of the foulest and most cold-blooded massacres known to history is recorded as taking place.

Can the writer of the account in the third Gospel have had all these terrible occurrences in his mind, yet absolutely suppressing them, when he penned the tale of the tranquil uneventful early days of Jesus? It is quite impossible for the ordinary mind to think so, and yet in his proem or dedication he emphatically claims to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first!"

The historical incidents of both narratives have now been passed under review, and unbiassed readers cannot fail to see that each is loaded with improbabilities having great cumulative force; that, when brought together, they are so unlike as to the events they tell of, and so mutually corrosive, that combination is impossible; that Matthew's prophetic quotations are inapposite, and treated precisely in the vicious method of the Scribes; and, lastly, that

the genealogies found in each are absolutely discordant.

Nothing is found to survive as a residuum save the assertion—common to both—of a non-natural birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, though not one single incident by which this result is reached is alike in the two narratives.

In Luke neither Herod nor the Sanhedrim nor the populace are introduced into the scene—the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna are private individuals, of whom we know nothing; Augustus and Quirinius are mentioned, but merely incidentally, as commanding and controlling a census which has been already examined; but when we turn to Matthew the remarkable behaviour of all historical characters involved in the story is manifest.

Here we find the simple-minded Magi actually telling the king of a country that they are seeking out an obscure but rightful claimant for his throne; while he, on his part, expresses an earnest desire to see his infant rival so that he also may do homage.

Neither side suspects the other: Herod at once acknowledges their exclusive revelation and acts upon it; he confidently expects the Magi to come back from Bethlchem with all the information, waiting with feverish anxiety but never attempting to send a messenger to that suburban village.

They, on their part, are only restrained by a celestial message from returning with their report, for though “all Jerusalem” is moved and excited by their

announcement of their errand, not a word of warning as to the king's character reaches them.

We could have understood a summary suppressal by Herod of the intrusive Magi, with their wanton introduction of such a firebrand announcement as that of the advent of a Messiah, but instead of taking this obvious course, he proceeds to murder infants in the district irrespective of rank or position, at great peril to his crown and dynasty, without even taking the trouble to inquire whether any special child had been identified by the foreigners.

The Sanhedrim, who do not denounce the necessarily unsupported pretension of these aliens that they have the monopoly of a heavenly communication for the benefit of the Hebrew race, must have been bereft of ordinary intelligence as well as devoid of national prejudice; as also must have been the whole of the Judaean populace in being "troubled" along with the king at the prospect of a rival claimant to the throne, and notably later, when that stubborn race submit to the deadliest insult, the wanton slaughter of their young children, without reprisals or even a protest to Augustus, to whom they were only too ready to appeal in far lesser grievances.

Augustus, too, is little better in condoning that strange sequel to a census, the Bethlehem massacre, of which he *must* have been informed, if not through his own officials, by means of Herod's numerous and implacable foes.

To conclude. The unscrupulous national writers who hate Herod decorously shun any allusion to this

tragedy. Josephus, in spite of the copious particulars he gives of this very period in Palestine, carefully suppresses it; while the canonical Gospels and Epistles equally avoid any reference to it.

It may be said that, taking the entire list, not one behaves as a rational human being. Such people as are here portrayed do not exist, save in the world of dreams or that of the Eastern fabulist.

This, though of little moment were the prologues to Matthew and Luke, to be treated as oriental fictions, is of vital import in the position assigned to them as embodying unalloyed truth.

CHAPTER XIV.

WERE THE BIRTH STORIES PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORKS? (EXTERNAL EVIDENCE).

THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES—EARLY WRITERS AND THEIR GOSPELS—OUR CANONICAL GOSPELS AND THEIR EXISTING TEXT.

IT now remains to inquire what evidence external or internal can be adduced bearing on the important question whether these contradictory stories of the nativity formed from the first an integral part of the Gospels to which we find them prefixed.

Among external facts influencing the question we must notice the changes that were taking place in the Christian communities during the period within which these Gospels were produced, so as to estimate what likelihood there was, in such a state of society, of doctrinal writings being generally respected and maintained unaltered.

It will then be necessary to trace what references exist in extant Church literature of the period to any recognised Gospel writings, and what was their status and authority: also in what form and manner our canonical Gospels may have come into existence,

and what guarantee we possess that the text we rely upon has not suffered from perversion, mutilation, or fraudulent interpolation in early times.

If we glance at the state of Christian society as to its growth, organisation, and doctrine, at the period during which our Gospels were indubitably composed and circulated—say from the date of the Crucifixion to the time of Irenæus—about 150 years, and first review the time when Paul was engaged in spreading the doctrines he had hitherto fiercely combated, we find, as might be expected, that the central authority for the infant religion was acknowledged to be fixed at Jerusalem. At the head of this college was Peter, supported by James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

From the epistle of James, a very early and almost unaltered work—by whomsoever written—(strangely enough clothed in almost classic Greek), and palpably a counterblast to the novel doctrine of justification by faith alone which Paul was disseminating,* we obtain a very clear view of this primitive stock of the faith.

The place of meeting is still called the synagogue, the faithful, especially the elders, cure diseases by prayer and anointing, a function afterwards to be confined to the clergy, Jesus is moreover in it only spoken of as the Jewish Messiah, there being no trace of the world-creating deity of Paul's writings.

* Compare James ii., 24, “Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith,” with Romans iii., 28, “We reckon, therefore, that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”

The moderation of tone of this epistle and the smallness of the differentiation of its doctrine from the ancient faith at once stamps it as the mouthpiece of those who would soon be left behind by the more fervent spirits who were already craving for the development of deeper mysteries.

Paul was constructing a theological system; the Jerusalem party had little of this, the Hebrew law sufficing.

It is remarkable that soon we find James, "brother of the Lord," represented by tradition as an extreme Hebrew zealot, at the head of the Jerusalem church and president of the council, though he had been unmentioned during the ministry of Jesus as an adherent and was not of the twelve, most of whom cannot be traced later in authentic history, though at a subsequent period reappearing, with the exception of Thomas, Philip, and Mattathias, as legendary martyrs in different and far distant countries.

The Apostle of the Gentiles—who himself tells us had started on his career of propagandism without any sanction from the Jerusalem chiefs, or even communication with them—could afterwards barely succeed in making his views respected as to tempering the rigour of the Mosaical law for the mixed multitudes he was drawing to his standard, in his arduous and unaided crusade in Asia and Achaia. From first to last he had to contend with the bitter and aggressive intolerance of a narrow-minded clique of Judæan ascetics who were constantly engaged

in thwarting him, while blind or indifferent to the practical difficulties which their unprogressive Hebrew prejudices set in his path.

Owing to this rupture and its long continuance, the words, works, and memory of Paul were, throughout large regions and for many years, hated and anathematised.

It was this radical division, the past existence of which can be clearly traced in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and which may be followed through numerous later writings, though denied or extenuated by the Church when a fusion, or rather absorption, had been finally effected, that must be kept in view, if we are to have a correct appreciation of the dogmas and writings of members of the earlier churches—their Gospels being included.

The central church of Jerusalem being poor—the name of “Ebionim” that they long retained expressing that condition in the Hebrew language—hoped to live by the alms of the faithful elsewhere, in this having a model in the priesthood of the old faith within their gates. The time was therefore imminent when the struggling churches of other lands would feel the strain of such a tax on their own resources, and would object to drain off gold that could be better spent in extending the range of the Gospel among the receptive pagans, and relieving poverty in their midst.

This difficulty in a large measure solved itself by the break-up of the Jerusalem centre through the war of A.D. 68, and the flight of that church

community and its chiefs to Pella, beyond the Jordan, and elsewhere—an act of prudence justified by subsequent events, though materially weakening its exterior authority.

On a portion of this period the authentic letters of Paul himself, notably his fiery protest to the Galatians, throw a strong light; the very imperfect narrative in the Acts is also useful. When these fail us a long obscure period succeeds, dimly lighted by chance allusions in the few controversial or doctrinal writings that have remained to us, either direct or embedded in the pages of Irenæus, Eusebius, and others.

It had been pre-eminently the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world that had rendered the first steps in the Christian propaganda comparatively easy; it was always in the synagogues, even in Rome, that Paul commenced his crusade.

But at that epoch the Roman peace was everywhere maintained; the entire empire lay open with facilities for travel that had been non-existent when native dynasties had ruled the various states. The Mediterranean and Black seas being no longer the resort of pirates, trade and navigation were enormously developed, national prejudices and boundaries were disappearing, the Gentile races (unlike the Jews) being for the most part tolerant of strange religions, and the government showing no tendency to interfere with abstract doctrine.

Besides these facilities for international communication the Greek tongue, or a dialect of it, had become

available as a medium of intercourse almost everywhere save in western Europe.

Thus aided, the new religion spread from east to west in spite of, perhaps partly in consequence of, the opposition it here and there met with, the prop of the synagogue being soon no longer needed, till at the close of the period we are surveying (about A.D. 180) the larger towns were honeycombed with it, the army had very many converts in its ranks, and even a few individuals of high position, principally ladies, had been brought into the fold. Tertullian a few years after the close of the second century could boast that its adherents were everywhere, and could defy the pagan authorities to eradicate the movement.

At this later date it was the great metropolitan cities, such as Rome, Corinth, Antioch, &c., that controlled the evolution of the faith. The Ebionite Hebraic-Christian communities, whose holding to the Aramaic tongue severed them even from their own race in Egypt and Cyrenaica, had drifted quite out of the current of dogmatic development.* Their centre had been, during the time of Hadrian, again fixed at Jerusalem, which city they were only permitted to enter on abjuring their Jewish connection, that nation being rigorously debarred by Rome from dwelling in

* Hegesippus, about the middle of the second century, can still say, though with palpable exaggeration, "In every city, that prevails which the Law and the Prophets and the Lord enjoin." If we now take Origen (about A.D. 220), who writes, "The Jews who are Christians, and yet obey the Law, are Ebionites and sectaries"; the progression towards emancipation is unmistakable.

their own capital, re-named *Ælia Capitolina*, with a temple to Jupiter occupying the sacred mount.

They were soon again scattered by the incidence of the revolt headed by the false Messiah, Bar Coziba, and ultimately drifted into the backwater of heresy. Epiphanius sneeringly calls them the party-wall between the church and the synagogue, and Jerome taunts them with failure in being either Jews or Christians.

Thus the ancient party of compromise bit by bit decayed ; under the name of Nazarenes, now a term of opprobrium, they lingered in obscure corners of the world till they are finally lost sight of in the rise of Mahomedanism.

In Paul's time the church had been but a meeting place for prayer and exposition, like the synagogue, its analogue and model, and like it in this also, that to expound doctrine was allowed to any of the congregation.

Under the influence of hysteria or inspiration men and even women gave utterance to prophecy or vague incoherent phrases, which were afterwards devoutly interpreted. Foreign or unknown tongues were supposed to be made use of in these phases of ecstasy. The meeting was practically a pure republic ; we do not find in the few remaining *authentic* writings of that age the “*episcopus*” or bishop ; the elders (*presbyteri*), as we learn by the *Acts*, were the official element.

Yet even in Paul's days the abuse of the pretension to prophetic power boded trouble to the infant

communities, for the Apostle has to pronounce an energetic injunction against its reckless employment, and urge modesty of demeanour on his flock.

If we compare with this the state of matters towards the end of the second century, we find that a graded hierarchy had been definitely established, the ecclesiastical boundaries being already conveniently formed by the imperial divisions ; the bishop, supported by his helpers, was the ruling power, the congregation by no metaphor was the flock, voiceless, powerless, the men silent, the women veiled ; the domination of the ecclesiastic was assured.*

We have a faint side light on an attempt at secular resistance to the encroachments of the clergy about the end of the first century, in the extant letter attributed to Clement of Rome, and addressed to the Church at Corinth. Those of the congregation there with the gift of tongues and power over the spirit world would not readily give up their claims to an exceptional position.

The epistle, though eminently conciliatory in tone, enjoins submission to authority as the duty of all and the best of gifts.

We here find Rome already taking the position of arbitrator, and therefore of superior.

Many years afterwards a bold but belated effort was made in the remote region of Phrygia, always a hot-bed of superstition, to recall the freedom of the

* The pseudo-Ignatius says, “Obey the bishop as Jesus Christ obeys the Father.”

first communities of believers; the old wonders, the inspiration of prophets and prophetesses, the speaking with tongues, the fervent asceticism were revived, but the movement had for the most part a local and ephemeral character, though here and there, even as far as Gaul, it attracted for a time adherents who rebelled against the rigid discipline of the orthodox church.

Definite organisation, control, and combination were so obviously necessary for militant churches, placed often in the midst of opposing populations, that the movement to establish a firm authority went on with little check, federation followed by absorption being constantly in progress.

Towards the close of the second century, the universally accepted legend told that the two greatest of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, had ended their lives by martyrdom in the Imperial city after having jointly and amicably founded a central metropolitan church, and the custom had become fixed abroad, except in Asia, which looked to the episcopate of Rome as a final court of appeal in ecclesiastical matters. Irenæus at that date says of it that "to it, the most ancient, the most illustrious, holding by a continued succession the true traditions, the rest of the church should defer."

The Roman Church was also rich, and was liberal to the needy faithful both then and afterwards (Eus. iv., 23), a powerful argument in favour of its right to exercise authority abroad.

The steps in this process of development of the

material framework of the Christian Church are briefly as follows :

First. The primitive church (*ecclesia*), where all the members may be equally inspired by the spirit.

Second. The elders or *presbyteri* claim considerable power over the congregation.

Third. The president of the *presbyteri*, the *episcopus* or overseer, absorbs by degrees nearly all their power over the church.

Fourth. The *episcopi* of the various communities meet or correspond to concert laws for the churches under their control.

Fifth. The *episcopus* of Rome, by virtue of the importance of the city he represents, and its ancient fame as the scene of martyrdom of the most eminent Apostles, gradually asserts, and in many cases obtains, the primacy among his fellows.

But apart from the growth of ecclesiastical authority, there was another potent influence working towards the transformation of the primitive religion. This was the doctrinal development that was in ceaseless operation.

There is scarcely a trace of dogma in the teachings of Jesus if we confine our view to the three synoptic Gospels ; it was a mere germ in the first years of the Apostolic labours, at which time it would have been as impossible to forecast its future shape as it would be by examining a strange tropical seed to find in what form of plant it would develop.

At first changes in doctrine and ritual would be

rapidly and lightly made, for men do not at once see all the consequences which may follow on an alteration they may judge unimportant though salutary.

In comparing churches widely spread, having little communication with any important centre, whose beliefs therefore would often be the chance product of the special form of evangelism that had reclaimed them from paganism, there would be found great variety in dogma at any one period, or even in a single district if again observed after the lapse of some years.

It is certain that the primitive Ebionites held the view that Jesus first received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism by John. This position we know was taken up by the very early sect that followed Cerinthus, and for long was maintained by numerous communities, though finally succumbing to the dogma of the heavenly birth.

The Judaism of the great Alexandrian Hebrew colony was quite different in type from that of Judæa, in which centre it was systematically ignored, as with the old faith of Israel it mingled a debased and mystical form of Hellenic philosophy.

When the Christian faith had penetrated upwards from the lowly and illiterate communities that had at first sheltered it, its barely defined dogmas were taken hold of by these academical sophists, who quickly bent them to their views and endeavoured to found a complete system upon them.

Their task in this was much facilitated by the

metaphysical liberties which the Christian writers in common with the Rabbis were accustomed to take in the explanation of the Biblical texts, through which a desired interpretation could be always secured.

In this manner came into existence the Gnostical heresy, whose exponents, rejecting the plain significance of the life, teaching, and death of Jesus, were interested to show that underlying all were mysterious principles which their tutored minds could alone perceive.

Their claim to a "*gnosis*" or special insight was soon seen to be dangerous in its consequences, as it was alleged to place the adept who needed not the restrictions necessary for the vulgar above and independent of the moral law.

This astounding perversion of the simple teachings of Jesus had a great vitality, retaining important influence on dogma even after its extravagant and protean growths had provoked rejection and denunciation by the Church, for the assumption of intellectual superiority so agreeable to the vanity of mankind, combined with the literary tone of the writings of that school (probably contrasting with the few works of the real Apostles), would recommend to cultured minds things which they had before deemed dreams of the lower orders, and gain adherents among a class who had hitherto looked down scornfully on the new sect.

The institution of the Lord's Supper from a simplest form of communion of the faithful was,

during this period, more and more developing into the position it now holds; and other forms of ceremonial, the rite of baptism for instance, were gaining in definition and importance.

The doctrine of the Trinity was in early days by no means rigorously defined, many contradictory and even fantastic beliefs being held, and it was destined to be the centre of the bitterest strife before being settled far later by authority in its present form.

Besides the ever-shifting schools of opinion concerning Gnosticism, the Trinity, the degree of dependence on the Jewish law, &c., &c., by which the saint or confessor of one generation became the heretic or schismatic of the next,* there was in those ages a constant succession of minor variations, often bizarre and ridiculous, having a temporary vogue, which it is needless to introduce here.

We have seen that—within the short space of 150 years—the Christian community, from a small group of Israelites in Palestine and a few scattered congregations in the East, had spread through the whole Empire without regard to racial distinctions, and had become a power in the State that could not be overlooked. From a pure republic of the most primitive organisation, it was fast becoming the appanage of strong sacerdotal corporations, among which the church of Rome, thanks to the dignity

* Even in their own lifetime we find Tatian, Tertullian, and, somewhat later, Origen placed outside the pale of orthodoxy. Truly says Harnack: "Dogma has ever, in the progress of history, devoured its own progenitors."

of its alleged founders, its energy and wealth, was successfully asserting spiritual supremacy ; while, from the utmost simplicity of doctrine and freedom of thought, it was formulating, under the stimulus of conflict with heretics and pagans, a complex body of dogmas that the ecclesiastic could alone fully comprehend and expound.

It is obvious that, surrounded by such stupendous and rapid changes, documents produced in different periods and in various localities would soon become obsolete or heterodox, unless subjected to the processes of amplification, suppression, or emendation, to bring them to the level of current thought and belief.

There remains to us a considerable mass of literary matter proceeding from the Christian churches of the first two centuries.

Sometimes the original work has been preserved, more often extracts merely are found embedded in later writings, such as the "Church History" of Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea (about A.D. 330), a compilation which, in spite of its manifold defects, is, from being often our sole source of knowledge, of considerable value, especially as to the early history of the canonical books, a matter in which the author much interested himself.

It is unfortunate that a literature mainly consisting of admonitory or doctrinal epistles, homilies, or attacks on heresy and Judaism, and, moreover, certainly not wholly genuine, leaves us for the most part dependent upon chance hints and inferences

when we seek for information as to the form and titles of Gospel writings accredited and made use of during the time.

The oldest authentic writing of all, dating possibly from the beginning of the second century, is the admonitory epistle to the church of Corinth already referred to.

Whenever the author introduces any Gospel precepts or sayings, no writing is named, but they are given as "the words of the Lord Jesus"; and though these quotations are generally to be identified with others in our extant Gospels, they are never textually exact, and sometimes are combinations of passages therein widely separated, or even of different application altogether.

In the "Clementine Homilies" (age doubtful, and partly spurious) the form "Jesus said" is also made use of in introducing the numerous quotations, no Gospel being referred to.

Then, putting aside writings which throw no light on our subject, we have towards the middle of the second century Justin Martyr, Papias, and Hegesippus, to whom a few words must be given.

Unfortunately all three more or less represent the Hebrew school of thought, so that the Western movement of doctrine which must have been going on, and the special authorities, if any, that it leant upon, are much hidden from us.

In the two works of Justin still extant, the "Apologia" addressed to the Emperor Antoninus (p. 246 ff) and the controversial dialogue with the

Jew Tryphon, written about the middle of the second century, the *name* of any Gospel whatever is first obtained. He constantly and exclusively refers to and quotes from a compilation which he calls "Memoirs of the Apostles," it being an open question what was the nature of this work, the title of which is never met with outside his pages.* It will be presently discussed.

He in one passage refers to "a certain man whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation made to him." Justin could not have thus phrased it had he known John as the author of the highly important dogmatic Gospel now attributed to him.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia about A.D. 140-150, wrote a work now lost, entitled "Exposition of the words of the Lord," a few extracts from which are found in Irenæus and Eusebius.

He was assiduous in collecting traditional or hearsay reports from those who had any link with Apostolic times, writing in his preface as follows (Eusebius iii., 39):—

"For I have not like the many delighted to hear those who spoke much, but those who taught the truth; not those who announced exterior commandments but those who told of those uttered by the Lord to our faith, which come from truth itself.

"And if I met with any one who had been a follower of the presbyters anywhere I at once inquired what did the

* Save a possible reference by Jerome long afterwards.

presbyters declare. What was said by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any of the disciples of the Lord. What was said by Aristion and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord ; for I did not think that so much benefit was to be derived from books as from the living voice of those still surviving.”*

We have from Papias the first mention of any of our Evangelists as chroniclers of Jesus, for he speaks of Mark as having put together informal records founded on Peter’s preachings ; and as to Matthew, he says “Matthew composed the *logia* (sayings) in the Hebrew dialect, and every one interpreted them as he was able.” How far the word “logia” at that time could cover a narrative of events as well as doctrinal teachings is a doubtful and much debated question.

As for Luke and John, if he was conversant with

* As even Eusebius flatly calls him a man of limited intelligence, and alludes to “certain strange parables told by him of our Lord and his doctrine, and some other matters rather too fabulous,” some of the tales he thus collected must have been staggering indeed.

He is also an extravagant millenarian, which the following passage preserved from his work *as an utterance of Jesus*, and alleged to be obtained direct from the presbyters, will testify to :—

“A day will come in which vines shall grow, each of which shall contain ten thousand stems, and each stem shall have ten thousand branches, and each branch ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot there shall be ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall produce twenty-five thousand casks of wine ; and when one of the saints shall seize one of the bunches of grapes, another bunch will cry out, ‘Take me, for I am better, and bless God for me.’”

This passage is quoted with approval by Irenæus, to be next mentioned. That these men, leaders of the Church, could be so entirely blind to the real spirit of the teachings of Jesus as to attach credit to such childish travesties of it, is evidence of the intellectual degradation of the epoch.

those writings (and it is difficult, having regard to his date and position, to believe him ignorant), it is certain they had not then their present titles and reputation.

Papias mentions an *epistle* by John the Apostle, and it is quite impossible that he could have attached such primary importance to what hearsay report had survived as to that Apostle's chance statements as above, if he knew all the time of an avowed and elaborate Gospel embodying his matured views and teachings.*

Eusebius tells us that one of the incidents narrated by Papias is found in a Gospel named "according to the Hebrews."

It will be remarked that Papias does not assert the non-existence of Gospel writings, but only that he prefers oral tradition to any of those he knows of. This bishop could not have deemed them inspired.

Hegesippus, a Jewish convert, wrote a work entitled "Historical Memoirs," now lost, a few extracts by Eusebius alone surviving. He took great interest in doctrinal questions, and, visiting various churches on his way, journeyed as far as Rome, where he found Anicetus, then bishop, this giving us a limiting date.

He wishes to show that there had been no change anywhere from ancient Apostolic custom, everything, including the succession of bishops, being carried out

* In the text of the Fourth Gospel the authorship of John is never asserted; the mysterious mode in which that avowal is evaded whenever it seems imminent is a literary enigma.

"as the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord enjoin." Such a state of things, however, is quite impossible, as to Hebrew law at all events, in the middle of the second century, when his visit took place, for at that date the East and West were widely sundered on the subject of the time to celebrate Easter, the anomaly being witnessed of one section of the faithful rejoicing on the actual days when the rest were in deep lamentation, a rupture with Judaism destined soon to be yet more bitterly accentuated, the Roman bishop Victor (about A.D. 180) even meditating the excommunication of the entire Eastern Church, till the growing authority of that episcopate enabled it to bear down all opposition to its decisions.

That Hegesippus in his book never makes mention of any of our Gospels is evident from the silence of Eusebius, who, however, points out that incidents found in it are derived from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, a circumstance which, in view of his environment and the strong admiration he expresses for the Hebrao- Christian communities, might be expected.

Irenæus, of eastern origin, a pupil of Polycarp, who again in early youth had known John the Apostle, migrated to Gaul, becoming Bishop of Lyons about A.D. 180, and afterwards wrote several works, one of which against heresies is extant. Respecting our subject he says:—

"Matthew indeed produced his Gospel written among the Hebrews in their own dialect ; Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing what

had been preached by Peter. And Luke, the companion of Paul, committed to writing the Gospel preached by him (*i.e.*, Paul). Afterwards John, the disciple of our Lord, the same that lay upon his bosom, also published the Gospel while he was yet at Ephesus."

He then announces in a most extraordinary and fantastic passage that these four Gospels form a divinely-preordained symmetrical quartet: the number four, neither more nor less, being foreshadowed by the eternal harmony of the universe, and sanctioned by the analogy of all sorts of natural phenomena.

And yet, with an inconsistency common to the age, after so strongly asserting the divine certification of these writings, he can, in flat contradiction of Luke's distinct statement, represent that Jesus was at least fifty years old at the time of his death!

We have seen that until we reach Irenæus at the close of the second century we have nowhere, with the exception of the brief notice of Papias as to writings by Matthew and Mark, any reference to our present canonical Gospels, or allusion to their titles, which, however, might admittedly be of later origin.

It is also to be noted that the only writing put forward during the entire period as claiming inspiration is the very questionable Apocalypse of John.

It is, therefore, surprising that after a lapse of not more than forty years from the time of Justin and Papias, one of whom leans solely on the unknown "Memoirs of the Apostles," while the other much

prefers tradition to any work known to him, we meet in Irenæus an ample recognition not only of the supreme position of all of our present Gospels, but also of their divine authority.

Still, Papias and Hegesippus—of whom the merest chance has left us relics—cannot be accepted as fair representatives of general Christian opinion in their day; and it is quite impossible to believe that the latter at his date could have travelled to Rome, visiting various centres of the faith on his way, without meeting with our present Gospels, or something very like them even under another name. It is probable that he deliberately shut his eyes to them, as he must have done to the lapses from the law of which he professes to be unconscious.*

We must also take into account that Irenæus, though he brought with him from Asia the grossly materialistic millenarianism of his master Polycarp, of Papias, and Melito, was at the time of writing Bishop of Lyons, and would have been long in contact with ideas and views, possibly with literature, foreign to what would be current in the East,† and might announce as a universal acceptance a recognition of the authority of these Gospels peculiar to Italy and the West.

* If what Justin says is true, that the Memoirs of the Apostles were read in all the churches, Hegesippus, his contemporary, a guest of those churches in the West, *must* have known that compilation well.

† Any writings that may have early circulated in the Western churches have perished without a trace. It was reserved for the fiery energy of Tertullian at the close of the second century to inaugurate the Latin polemical literature.

We know that he was very bitter against the Judæo-Christian branch, a circumstance which suggests a change of front in the pupil of Polycarp.

As during the whole of the second century, till we reach Irenæus, the only writings cited as actually reporting the words or deeds of Jesus are the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" and the "Memoirs of the Apostles," we must now inquire as to the character of these works, and whether they were in any way allied to our canonical Gospels.

The work entitled, or at all events known as the "Gospel according to the Hebrews," now wholly lost after an existence of many centuries, which is mentioned by Eusebius as made use of by both Papias and Hegesippus, is after the second century frequently spoken of by Christian writers, a circumstance not to be wondered at, as it was to the Hebrew people that the call of Jesus was originally and, according to some passages, exclusively addressed. From this cause also the writing would be in the Hebrew language, or more properly speaking, the popular Aramaic dialect of it.

There is immense confusion in the statements of early authorities as to actual affinities between this archaic* Gospel and our present Matthew, though all evidence tends to connect them.

* No force attaches to the argument that has been advanced that because in the "Gospel according to the Hebrews," as quoted by the late Fathers, including Jerome, certain passages are hardly compatible with an early origin it must have been a later composition than our received Gospels, for any such writing must have been over and over again manipulated and rearranged long before their day.

Irenæus, our first witness, whose early date gives value to his testimony on a matter which he had no apparent inducement to pervert, represents the Hebraeo-Christian sect of the Ebionites as using solely the “Gospel according to Matthew,” yet Eusebius, about 130 years later, after recording that there were (then?) two sects included under that title—the first asserting the natural birth of Jesus and the necessity of adhering to the Mosaical law; the second admitting the conception of the Holy Spirit, but disputing a pre-existence—adds that both these divisions reject Paul as an apostate from the Law and “use only the ‘Gospel according to the Hebrews,’ esteeming the rest as of little value.”

It will be seen from another passage (iii., 25) that Eusebius distinctly separates the two works, for when speaking of the books received as genuine in his day, our present Gospels of course being included, he adds, “but there are also some who number among these the ‘Gospel according to the Hebrews’ with which those of the Hebrews that have received Christ are particularly delighted.”

Towards the close of the third century the distinction was not clearly drawn, for Epiphanius (a very untrustworthy witness, however) treats the two titles as synonymous.

At about the same date the more reliable Jerome does not definitely discriminate between them, for (Adv. Pel. iii., 2) he refers to the writing “which is used up to the present day by the Nazarene sect—the ‘Gospel according to the Hebrews,’ otherwise after

the Apostles, or, as many maintain, according to Matthew." *

But though closely allied, especially in some of their varied forms, and even in many cases confounded, it is clear that they were not at any time identical; and this distinction is particularly confirmed at a far later date (about A.D. 800) by the evidence of Nicephorus, a Byzantine, who, in a register which he compiled of the number of verses contained in the Scripture books, mentions both works, allotting to each a different total of verses.

We have now to consider the question, what can be that mysterious compilation, the "Memoirs of the Apostles," to which Justin continually appeals, and which he describes as "by the apostles and their followers"; but which neither before nor after him is ever heard of?

He tells us that in the Sunday meetings of the faithful "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time allows"; they are, therefore, indisputably the Gospel text of the day, at all events in the West.

It can hardly be credited that one who had inquired, however superficially, into the Greek philosophical systems before turning to Christianity, and who afterwards was a distinguished ornament of the Church, could be quite unaware of the existence of

* "In evangelis *juxta Hebraos* quo utuntur usque hodie Nazareni, secundum Apostolos, sive, ut plerique autumant *juxta Mattheum*." The original is given, as the exact force of "autumant" is matter of opinion.

a series of works containing in considerable detail the teachings and tenets of the religion which, after investigation, he had embraced, and that are about forty years later found in the position of undisputed supremacy, with their divine sanction fully recognised in the country in which he wrote.

And not only this, but the work so depended upon by this champion of the faith, read in the churches, and, therefore, assuredly well known to all, would appear to be almost immediately wholly lost to sight!

As it is quite impossible that an authoritative production of many Apostles, which the title of Justin's standard work proclaims it to be, could be afterwards so divided out as to authorship as to produce our present Gospels, may it not be a mere generic title, not generally prevailing, but used by Justin himself to cover a certain group of writings such as those attributed to our four evangelists, with or without others, merely brought together in one volume or collection?

We know also that combinations and harmonies of Gospels were not out of the question in Justin's day, for very shortly afterwards a blend was made of some of them by Tatian (actually Justin's own pupil), known as the "Diatessaron," which had for several centuries considerable importance with a section of believers, though ultimately suppressed owing to its alleged tampering with text and meaning in favour of certain unorthodox dogmas.

It is true that Justin's numerous quotations are

hardly in any case verbally identical with those in our Gospels even when giving the sense, and sometimes combine passages therein widely separated, but it must be remembered that reference in those days was not so easy as now, and that it was a habit to trust to memory, many sayings of the Master in slightly different phrasing being common property among believers. Justin also is not particularly careful as to accuracy in other matters.

He gives, however, apparently as excerpts from his Gospel, sentences not found in any of ours, which tends to show that if our canonical Gospels were in the collection they had not quite their present form.

As might be expected in church communities scattered throughout the Roman Empire and with schisms and heresies rising and decaying on all sides, a medley of so-called Gospels apart from those now accepted came into existence as the religion developed. The words of Luke's proem alone are conclusive on the point, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative," and we find mention and sometimes extracts from these productions in the church writings.

Peter, Thomas, Matthias, James, and Jude are Apostles to whom Gospels were attributed, the Gospels according to the Nazarenes, Ebionites, Egyptians, &c., &c., of which we also find mention were probably variants on the parent "Gospel according to the Hebrews," adapted to particular races and opinions, while no heresy was without its

specially arranged and manipulated Gospel. We cannot besides expect that writings would be the same, or be retained in the same form, in Gaul and Egypt, Bithynia and Africa, Rome and Antioch.

Along with the ever-increasing mass of fraudulent literature, such as the "Acts of Pilate," the "Letters of Jesus and Agbarus," &c., &c., that was coming into existence, attempts at filling in the gaps in the life of Jesus were also made; but even to parody the force, lucidity, and dignity of the real teachings of the Master was beyond the skill of these inventors, so that the ministry was left untouched, and their feeble efforts were confined to the easy construction of ridiculous legends dealing with the infancy of Jesus, with Joseph and Mary, and even with the parents of the latter.

It is indisputable that a firm belief in the almost immediate dissolution of the world with a return of Jesus as a judge was universal among the primitive Christians, a coming in the clouds so imminent that the conviction of it rendered possible the short-lived community of goods among the first Jerusalem converts; and though with the lapse of time the expectation became fainter—Paul's epistles and other canonical works showing the gradation—the expression of it exists in gradually attenuated forms in the first three Gospels,* though in the fourth, a later work, it is suppressed, or at all events absent.

* In Matthew (xvi., 27, 28) Jesus is represented as saying: "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works"; and adding:

Why should they write the life of their Master when they were daily expecting his return ?

But though the compilation of a biography of the founder, however incomplete, during the first generation after his death would thus be as highly improbable as apparently superfluous, yet his sayings and doctrinal teachings would most certainly be early placed on record to confirm the faith of the believer as well as to help the convert. Though Jesus was returning in the immediate future, and worldly histories were of little importance, many of his invaluable precepts, which had originally been orally preserved, would become one by one fixed with more or less of accuracy in manuscript.

To make collections of the sayings of celebrated doctrinal teachers was already an established custom in the Hebrew world, and this would inevitably be done in the case of the lessons of Jesus ; in the first place, in Palestine, where he had lived and spoken, the compilations supplying a ready framework for a Hebrew Gospel, though afterwards many versions would be found circulating in the exterior world.

We have seen (p. 333) that in the earliest appeals to the authority of Jesus (those in Clement's epistle) the words used are simply "Thus saith the Lord," which points to such a source.

The rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, already

"Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." This is much modified in Luke (ix., 27), whose similar sentence is thus completed : "till they see the kingdom of God."

referred to, have just yielded up a single ragged leaf, with very little doubt, torn from such a book. In this fragment, written in third-century Greek script, we find six disconnected sayings of Jesus in a fairly decipherable condition, each headed by the phrase, "Jesus saith." The first page commences with part of the final sentence of the dictum as to the mote and beam in the eye, which is word for word as in Luke vi., 42, but among all the rest, though there is now and then a similitude with portions of known sayings, none are identical with any in our Gospels, while some are startlingly different and puzzling, affording much employment to skilled commentators.

But these collections could hardly in every case be entirely made up of severely isolated dicta. Many aphorisms and discourses of Jesus are so bound up with the circumstances which gave rise to them that dissociation is almost impossible except with a great loss of cogency and point.

For instance, the reproof of the affectation of the minutiae of Sabbath observance is led up to by the corn-plucking incident ; the saying that those are his true family who hear the word of God and do it, by the coming of his mother and brethren to search for him ; the saying that what proceeds from the mouth defiles, not that which enters it, by the Pharisees' objection to the disciples eating with unwashed hands, &c., &c.

Besides, were not the miracles of the prophet "mighty in deed and word" sure to be recounted

and even accentuated? Most of these were inextricably linked with valued exhortations or teachings.

The three first Gospels are not widely different from what might be expected to be produced by those whose task it was, when the immediate coming had been silently disproved, to construct, mainly from such materials, a somewhat consecutive narrative. The real life history of Jesus, unnoticed in the outer world, save as to the final tragedy and its sequel, owing to its being for the most part enacted in the obscure and remote province of Galilee, would, in consequence of the terrible reverses ending in the destruction of Jerusalem which the nation had since undergone, and the resulting emigration and dispersion of the infant Church, be fast becoming legendary. The existing *logia* would thus be invaluable material when knitted together, along with such exterior facts or traditions as could be gathered.

It will be observed that the space occupied by our Gospels in the life of Jesus, putting aside the isolated accounts of the nativity in Matthew and Luke, is only coincident with the short period of teaching (from one to three years) covered by the *logia*.

Of these we find one obviously unassimilated mass crowded together in Matthew and known as the "Sermon on the mount," almost certainly copied from a single manuscript, and must suspect that other portions of extant groups of sayings were made use of though distributed more judiciously in the narrative.

Now, it is impossible to believe that the life of one represented by two of these writers as commenced under the most striking manifestations of divine interference and protection, and who in boyhood, in the single anecdote we possess, was already noted for a marvellous development of intellectual power, could be so uneventful for thirty years that his biographers, one and all, have nothing whatever to record.

Therefore one of two things must have happened ; either the chroniclers were incapable of seeing justly the import of what had occurred during the long series of years which they ignore both as to deeds and words, or, on the other hand, becoming acquainted with Jesus only when he had attained the age of thirty, they could obtain no reliable information covering that period, being thus compelled, if they would not invent, to leave it blank and begin their story at the first incident known to them, viz., the meeting on the Jordan.

The history from the trial and death onwards being outside the range of the logia, there would be no original documents to make use of ; the writers would, therefore, have to trust to apostolic or other tradition and their own resources, and it is observable that much wider divergencies mark this portion of the narratives.

It is, therefore, a complete misapplication of the term to speak of a "life of Jesus" ; there is no such thing in existence, nor can it now be compiled except from the unassisted imagination of the writer.

We possess but these four collections of scattered sayings, anecdotes, and incidents, covering an undefined but certainly extremely short period before his untimely death, strung together without the slightest pretence to chronological order, or with vague phrases utterly valueless as time indications,* these compilations being in each case followed by a minutely circumstantial account of the occurrences attending and following the tragedy of the condemnation and crucifixion.

The real life history from the cradle to the age of thirty is to us absolutely unknown, for not a single sentence, Christian or pagan, throwing light on it exists, save the brief notice of an incident of boyhood found at the close of Luke's prologue.

Our canonical Gospels having been admittedly in circulation from seventeen to eighteen centuries ago, it behoves us to satisfy ourselves respecting the authenticity of the text we at present possess.

The original sources from which our "revised" version is mainly derived are the following.

We have the *Codex Sinaiticus*, a Bible manuscript discovered in the convent of Mount Sinai, now at St. Petersburg; the *Codex Vaticanus*, in the library of the Papal palace; the *Codex Alexandrinus*, in the British Museum; and a fourth known as the *Codex Ephraemi*, in Paris, this one being a palimpsest or erased copy with other writing overlaid, and, therefore, very illegible.

* Such as "in those days"—"after six days"—"at that season"—"and forthwith"—"after these things"—"after some days"—&c., &c.

These four, written in an old square character of the Greek, named the *uncial*, which in a great measure dates them, are the most important, and may range from the middle of the fourth century to the end of the fifth. None of these were available when in the time of James I. our authorised version was produced.

We have also many manuscripts of later date and more or less imperfect, at Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Rome, and elsewhere.

Yet again there are in existence a large number of copies of the Gospels of various ages, written in a more recent (*cursive*) running hand, some of which might possibly but not probably be of texts quite as ancient as any above, if they chanced to have been transcripts of very old writings.

Besides these documents, all of them chance flotsam from the wreck of the old civilisation, and whence derived we know not, we have a complete *Latin* version, drawn up by the gifted Jerome (about A.D. 380), on a careful examination and collation of manuscripts extant in his day, which has been continuously in use ever since its formation, being even made a standard by certain sections of Christians.

The revised text is a compromise between all these authorities, after prolonged and deliberate estimate of their respective weights by many minds representing various classes of opinion.

This mass of writing has been further supplemented, not many years ago, by the discovery in

the convent of Nitria of a very imperfect copy of the Gospels in the Syriac language, and more recently still a much more complete text of them in the same tongue, found in the Sinai monastery, it being, like the Codex Ephraemi above referred to, a palimpsest almost effaced, has literally been brought to light, having been photographically reproduced by the patience and skill of Mrs. Lewis, of Cambridge. This last document is of high value, for it bears internal evidence of being by far the earliest version we possess.

It is customary to represent the dearth of early Gospel manuscripts as due to rigorous extirpation of them by the pagans, but it would have been quite impracticable to suppress works so insignificant in volume, spread over East and West in the watchful guardianship of proscribed or unauthorised communities, or in private keeping ; it would not be so simple a matter as the destruction of a library.

And after about A.D. 320 this danger was finally at an end, and there was no bar to the preservation or the unlimited reproduction of ancient writings. Ignorance, stupidity, and neglect, aggravating the adverse chances of time, are answerable for a vast destruction, and the intestine divisions of the new religion, with the rapid changes of dogma already reviewed, found the ecclesiastical authorities more concerned in suppressing unorthodox opinions and in securing their own ascendancy, than in the safe keeping of old copies of the Gospels, probably in many cases in their view tainted with heresy.

Personal vanity in combination with paucity of material is alone to be thanked for the fortunate use of old and despised Gospel pages for new writings such as those of Ephraem, or of John the recluse, whose valueless efforts have overlaid and thereby preserved the documents of Paris and Sinai.

The art of printing has rendered falsification of literary productions almost impossible. A mechanical process by which each copy is of absolute uniformity practically forbids tampering with the text; but it was far otherwise in the ancient world, which, depending solely upon manuscript, had grave difficulties to contend with.

There were then the errors of transcription, whether due to the habitual employment of abbreviations, to indistinct writing, or to the ignorance or carelessness of the copyist; comments and glosses possibly by different hands, added in the margin or interlined, were often in later copies incorporated in the text;* additions and suppressions, due to an honest belief in the later transcriber that his predecessor had stumbled, are frequently responsible for variations in manuscripts; and finally, when we reflect how easy were fraudulent erasures and small interpolations, we can scarcely wonder that writings professedly the same differ so widely as they do.

The early Christian literature, not being published by the trade as were the generality of works in the ancient world, but transcribed privately by

* Jerome tells us that a note he himself made in the margin of a manuscript he found in a later copy embodied in the text.

writers within the sect itself for the use of detached communities, would be liable not merely to the innocent blunders of the uninterested professional copyist, but to the much more insidious and deadly variations due to the unscrupulous partisan with strong views, who is ready to turn now and then the text before him a little aside so as to harmonise with them.

Thus we frequently find a deep dogmatic design lurking under these different readings.

It must be remembered that in those days of manuscript and *undated* writings it would be almost impossible to prove that the original author himself had not made or sanctioned the addition or correction, or even of two varied copies to demonstrate which was the older or more authentic, while judgment would be confused by the fact that most communities would cling to their own accustomed version ; also that as no Gospel writings were yet held to be inspired, there would be little scruple even among the more scrupulous in altering and amending them here and there.

The easiest and safest way to defend a cherished dogma at that epoch was to manufacture an allusion to it in some accredited work, which should foreshadow and sanction it ; we have numerous and clear instances of this practice, the prevalence of which cannot be disputed.

During these first centuries, the shades of belief developed in far distant countries being almost infinite and little checked, the variations of accepted

dogma were also almost endless: to merely copy a list of the titles of schisms and heresies of those times, each of which it must be borne in mind was supported by its specially adapted Gospel, would be a lengthy and useless process. Moreover, the age was "essentially uncritical": if the dogma was acceptable the work was accepted, if otherwise it was denounced and repudiated.

Thus there could be no real guarantee of authenticity. Paul complains of spurious epistles attributed to him that were put about; Tertullian accuses the disciples of Marcian of continually altering their Gospel for doctrinal reasons; and Tatian was charged with omitting passages from his because they did not harmonise with his views, these heresiarchs being by no means the only offenders, for the process was going on on all sides.

Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, makes the following complaint:—

"As the brethren desired me to write epistles I wrote them, and these the apostles of the devil have filled with tares, perverting some things and adding others. It is not therefore matter of wonder if some have also attempted to adulterate the sacred writings of the Lord, since they have done so in other works that are not to be compared with these."—Eusebius iv., 23.

Under all these conditions adverse to accuracy and uniformity, we may safely say that during the first hundred years of the existence of the Gospel writings there were not two manuscripts professedly of any one of them fairly alike. It would only be

when the scattered churches had become federated by a strong hierarchy and in active correspondence, that the tendency towards infinite divergency in these writings would be stayed, and something like verbal uniformity approached.

The greatest, though perhaps not the most dangerous falsifications, would be in the first century of their composition; afterwards interpolation and alteration would still be possible, but suppression would be no longer easy.

Scripture manuscripts of, say, the fourth century—and, as has been shown, we possess little earlier—are of slight use in determining whether words or sentences have been interpolated or tampered with.

At that date the accredited Gospels had been for a long time subject to keen scrutiny by scholars of whom Origen is a type, as well as by opponents; defects of proof would have been made good, phrases modified, new matter introduced, and dangerous admissions got rid of by deletion. Uniformity to a very considerable extent must at that period have been attained, the practice of Sunday reading to the congregation tending to check variation, and an influential hierarchy working for the same end.

It is only by the highly improbable chance of the discovery of a copy of either of the Gospels, written early in the second century, before criticism was born, that we may learn what were the originals.

Our last hope of this is rapidly dying out owing to the unchecked and ruthless operations of the native Egyptian diggers for papyri and "*anticas*."

And further, the actual variations found in our extant codices, executed at a date when we might have thought that variations were no longer possible, give us some idea of the differences to be found in copies three centuries before the earliest of them, when no order had been put into the scattered churches, with ritual and dogma purely local.

One or two illustrations may be given of this unexpected diversity in our codices, the changes being marked by dogmatic intention, mere clerical errors having been by that time, for the most part, eliminated.

The words "*my* heavenly Father," found in Matthew xv., 13, are in the Clementine homilies, and also in the Sinai palimpsest, rendered as "*the* heavenly Father"; a slight but motived difference.

In 1 John v., 7 and 8, the passage "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," an audacious interpolation, absent from the best and oldest manuscripts, and even from the best copies of Jerome's Latin version, has at last been expunged from the text by the revisers, after having been for ages used as a support to the Trinitarian doctrine.

It may be boldly said that Mark's Gospel never ended originally with the words "they were afraid," (*εφοβοῦντο γάρ*) in the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter. Yet all the oldest manuscripts so end it, though others—far less valued—have our present verses, 9 to 20. In the Syrian palimpsest the eighth

verse is the conclusion, clearly marked by a line of dots, after which Luke at once begins.

Have we not here the strongest probability that—in view of the awkward bluntness of Mark in other passages—the concluding sentences in the original work, relating to the history of Jesus after the entombment, were not in harmony with a more developed tradition, and were suppressed, and that after a time the mutilation was hidden by a completion that did not jar with current belief?

From what has been here adduced it is evident that we cannot have the guarantee which could be desired that our present text is uniformly reliable as originally written.

It is true that the two writings with which we are specially concerned have at present the titles “according to St. Matthew” and “according to St. Luke,” but we have seen that no works so named are to be found cited, at all events up to the end of the first century and a-half of our era, though it is impossible for the most adverse criticism to maintain that they were not (in some form) earlier in existence.

The present titles, “according to Matthew” (*κατὰ Ματθαῖον*) and “according to Luke” (*κατὰ Λουκᾶν*), no more mean that they were the personal productions of those two individuals, and not merely according to their views and teachings, than that of the much quoted book of the early period, the Gospel “according to the Hebrews” (*καθ' Ἐβραιὸν*), signifies that it was the joint literary effort of the entire Jewish nation.

With regard to Matthew's Gospel, it is not easy

to conceive any man, under the circumstances, so divesting himself of his personality as to write as follows :—

“ And as Jesus passed forth from thence He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, ‘ Follow Me,’ and he arose and followed Him.”

That the writer, if Matthew, should so deliberately go out of his way to avoid making an avowal that would give the authority of a witness to his words, and was therefore called for, if he had at heart the interests of his Master’s service, is quite unimaginable.

As for Luke, it is probable that that follower of Paul has some real connection with the book now named after him, as any inventor of a title for it would in all probability have selected the name of an Apostle.

If these two writings had been known at the time they were given to the world as the definite productions of men of leading and authority in the new faith, companions of the Lord or pupils of his Apostles, the fact that they should never be appealed to by name as standard authorities in early writings is incomprehensible.

No reason can be possibly suggested for a later suppression of an authorship that would render secure the position of the writing throughout the universal Church and be helpful to the faith and confidence of the novice.

But the absence of names is quite intelligible

if these writings grew up piecemeal and were at first generally known and circulated as compilations of sayings and traditions the accumulated work of many unidentified.

Under such circumstances of composition it is only when they have become famous and the original facts have been lost sight of, that individual names are linked with them.

While it is hardly possible to doubt that in the middle of the second century our Gospels in some form and under some title were in circulation, we have now to find if there is any evidence that at that period the prologues formed part of two of them.

As might have been expected, there is little to glean in this field; the Christian writers nearly always engaged in defence or exposition of doctrine being principally concerned in appealing to the recorded teachings and sayings of their Master.

It is only in connection with one dogma—the Messiahship or divine nature of Jesus as evidenced by his birth of a virgin at Bethlehem—that we may expect an early reference to the incidents which surrounded an unconscious infancy.

Stories of the nativity were probably in existence in various versions for some time before they would be appropriated or adapted as a completion, after a fashion, of the biography of Jesus.

Of the two in our Gospels, that in Matthew is obviously the cruder tradition, the other is more complex, and giving suggestions of literary adapta-

tion. At a later date the incidents became more and more marvellous, till we reach the low level of the apocryphal writings.

It is plain that versions of the stories found in each of our Gospels were known to Justin, who alone helps us in this inquiry, for he is aware of the message of the angel to Joseph specially found in Matthew, and also that to Mary peculiar to Luke ; he introduces the birth at Bethlehem common to both, with its incidence during the rule of Quirinius as told by Luke alone, along with the appearance of the star and the Magi's visit, as recorded exclusively in Matthew.

Yet on nearly a dozen occasions, in referring to the Magi, he represents them as from *Arabia*, which he could not have got from Matthew's version, and he says nothing of the Star guiding them and placing itself over the very house in Bethlehem that sheltered Jesus, though it is this miracle, told by Matthew, which alone gives warrant to the belief that the mundane import of what would otherwise be a natural phenomenon, patent to all the world, and which the pagans would have differently interpreted, was rightly read by these sages.

Again, he explicitly says (Contrâ Tryp. 43), "Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin, of the line of Abraham and tribe of Judah, and of David," thus deliberately destroying Joseph's position both in Matthew's and Luke's prologues, in text and pedigree as being of David's race, and, instead, pointedly represents as the cause of his going to

Bethlehem that "his descent was from the tribe of Judah, which inhabited that region."

He further represents Jesus as born in a cave, a detail not to be found in Matthew or Luke, and as he is careful to enforce from Isaiah (xxxiii., 16) that the incident was foretold, he must have taken it from some authority he used, for we cannot suppose he invented it to fit the prediction.

Justin probably got his notion as to Mary's descent from the same source as later supplied the foundation of the extant extravagant "Protevangelion of James" and the "Gospel of Mary," which both hold that view, and also the birth in the cave, which is found in the first-named writing ; besides, in recording the appearance of the angel to Joseph (Matthew) and also to Mary (Luke) he differently applies the words of that messenger, therein agreeing with the "Protevangelion," a fact which suggests drawing from the same source.

Also, according to Justin (Apol. i., 34), Quirinius is Roman *procurator* of Judæa at the time of the nativity ; he therefore could not have had Matthew's prologue before him, in which Herod is king, and such a Roman governor of the district is impossible ; nor could he have possessed that of Luke when giving this incorrect detail, for *there* Quirinius is rightly stated to be president of Syria, a very different grade, as no Syrian subject, such as Justin was, could be unaware of. Finally, while recording so many incidents and details extraneous or contradictory to our two prologues, he omits the conclusive

divine manifestation to the shepherds found in that of Luke.

It results from this survey of early Christian times that while there is much to make us believe that Matthew and Luke, in some form, were extant in the middle of the second century, there is no evidence that the prologues then formed part of them; on the contrary, there is proof that a quite different tradition or narrative of the incidents of the nativity was current and actually made use of by a prominent and skilled controversialist.

CHAPTER XV.

WERE THE BIRTH STORIES PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORKS? CONTINUED (INTERNAL EVIDENCE).

INCONSISTENCY OF INCIDENT AND ACTION FOUND IN THE TWO PORTIONS—DIFFERENCE IN DIALECT AND DOGMA.
CONCLUSION.

IT yet remains to examine what *internal* evidence exists throwing light on the question whether the present Gospels of Matthew and Luke are homogeneous compositions or not.

We can hardly fail to observe at once that the prologue to the first Gospel is closely allied both in style and doctrinal views with the body of the work, the whole having a strongly marked Hebraical character, and the prophecies being introduced in a similar manner in both portions of the composition.

Apart from the brief story of the miraculous birth itself, which does not concern us here, we have the visit of the Magi, which has no apparent results, and Herod's reported atrocity, which misses its mark, both little calling for reference later, so that we can hardly expect to find corroborative or rebutting evidence in the remainder of the work.

It is quite otherwise with Luke's story of the nativity. Here, apart from linguistic and doctrinal

differences of a striking character to be afterwards commented upon, we find introduced into the story many individuals the consistency of whose actions later with those told of them in the prologue must be examined if we are to form a valid opinion whether the two widely separated sections are the work of one man. These are John the Baptist and his parents, the mother of Jesus, her "kinsfolk and acquaintance," and even the townspeople of Nazareth, the home of the family.

Yet there is one difficulty common to both Gospels that must be first noticed.

It is a remarkable fact that Justin in the middle of the second century, in his controversy with his Jewish antagonist Tryphon,* who had asked him the pertinent question how it was that Jesus had required the descent of the Holy Spirit at the baptism if he had been possessed of it even from the conception, could find no better defence than the passage which he gives from his standard Gospel, "The Memoirs of the Apostles," recording the words of the heavenly voice on that occasion as "Thou art my Son, *this day have I begotten thee*," which actually weaken and almost destroy his own contention.

It is true that in our present texts of Matthew and Luke the heavenly declaration is given as "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," which does not gainsay, though it does not affirm, the past dignity of Jesus.

* It is of no moment whether this personage is imaginary or not, as he is the mouthpiece of Hebrew opinions.

We may take it as a safe canon of criticism in such matters, that the reading less dogmatically favourable is the earlier, and it is certain that Justin, even in his prominent position, had no knowledge of a variation so much more helpful to his argument.

The baptism is immediately followed—both in Matthew and Luke—by the forty days' fast in the desert, to which ordeal Jesus is impelled by the Holy Spirit. Such a retirement from the world and abstention from food for a season is, even as to the exact length of the probation, in perfect accordance with Hebrew sentiments and precedents,* the appropriate initiation into the great undertaking that was to ensue; a preparation apparently devoid of meaning, if the narrators of it had recognised that Jesus was in possession of the Holy Spirit from the first, in which case it is impossible to suggest that the discipline was needed, but perfectly explicable if they believed, at the time of writing, that the baptism was the inauguration of His divinity and the formal dedication to Messianic labours.

This latter view would also alone render intelligible the schemes of Satan, who might be conceived to have hoped by prompt action to render Jesus unworthy of a newly acquired dignity, but whose absolute inactivity for thirty years is quite

* For instance, Moses (Exodus xxxiv., 28), when he receives from Jehovah, on Mount Sinai, after a fast of forty days, the tables of the law; and Elijah (1 Kings xix., 8), when he flees to Mount Horeb, and, after a fast of similar duration, receives from Jehovah a message to Israel.

inexplicable on the other hypothesis of the Sonship from the first.

It is remarkable that the incidents attending the baptism and temptation, so difficult of reconciliation with the declarations of the prologues, occur at once in the forefront of the main portion of either Gospel, when it is hard to comprehend the failure of writers to have in mind the import of what they had set down only a page or two previously.

We now turn to Luke, and it must be admitted that Strauss calls the opinion that the two first chapters of the third Gospel are a later addition, an "uncritical assumption," and so dismisses it.

Dr. Ramsay also, in the work from which we have so frequently quoted, constantly writes and argues as if it were indisputable that what we call Luke is one individual. He says:—

"It is certain from their language, and it is admitted by every scholar, that the two books (Luke and Acts) were composed by a single author as parts of a single historical work on a uniform plan" (p. 3).

This *assertion* is afterwards used as a basis for argument—thus:—

"I put the question to any reasonable person. Is it consistent with human nature that a writer who claims to be earnestly setting forth the simple facts should begin with so impudent a series of fabrications?" (p. 14)

and, again,

"Can any reasonable judge believe that the author who wrote the rest of the two books could be guilty of such deliberate deception?" (p. 115)

The above line of reasoning would be forcible as following the admission, which is boldly claimed, that the present text of Luke with the Acts is a homogeneous work, and that this is universally recognised by those competent to judge.

However, that view happens to be most strongly contested on weighty grounds, as Dr. Ramsay should surely be aware.

And at all events it is not applicable here, where the view is taken (and reasons will be given in support drawn from within the work itself) that not only the story of the nativity, as a whole, never formed part of the original Gospel, but besides is in itself composite, the proem or dedication that heads it being at all events by a different, and third, hand. A further invitation held out by Dr. Ramsay (in pp. 18, 19) to explain from what motive he who composed the proem, with its assertion of special first-hand knowledge, should adopt or adapt a legendary tale without acknowledgment need not, therefore, be accepted.*

All that concerns us is whether certain nominally historic incidents are true, or at least consistent with probability.

Inquiry as to the motives of anonymous individuals in some undetermined part of the Roman Empire so long ago would in these days be merely a waste of time, besides affording a loophole for the

* Dr. Ramsay should be aware that "impudent fabrications" are not imputed to the author or later editor of Luke.

introduction of endless verbal discussions, in which the main question may be lost sight of.

We may search in vain through the three first Gospels, apart from the two prologues, for any recognition of the circumstance that Jesus was born at Bethlehem; on the contrary, in every case his native town is stated to be Nazareth.

The unclean spirits address him as "Jesus of Nazareth," and the people do the same (Mark i., 24; Luke xviii., 37). Nazareth is called his "own country" in Matthew (xiii., 54) and Mark (vi., 1); in the latter case Jesus himself emphasising the fact by saying "A prophet is not without honour but in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house."

In the Acts also (ii., 22, and iii., 6) Peter, addressing the people of Judæa, speaks of his Master as "Jesus of Nazareth," which in view of the inferior position held by the Galileans in the estimation of his audience, and the certain stumbling-block it would prove to their belief in his Messianic dignity, he could not possibly have done had he been aware of his birth in the royal village from whence they had the conviction that their anointed King was to arise.

It is a remarkable fact that from first to last, in view of the obvious duty of the disciples, when making a claim on behalf of Jesus to the Messiahship, no contradiction is put into their mouths by the Evangelists of the current impression that their Master was a Galilean born the conclusion being

irresistible that they were unaware of the Bethlehem birth ; and stranger still, that nowhere in any of the Gospels is there a comment by the writers themselves on the errors of friends and foes alike on the important subject of Jesus's birthplace, though there are places in their works where it would have been not only appropriate but apparently inevitable.

As we cannot suppose that they all deliberately suppressed their knowledge, the plain alternative is that they knew nothing on the subject, and that the prologues containing these details and now attached to two of their works, were not then written.

Dr. Ramsay, in this dearth of evidence, detects in the following passage of the fourth Gospel a very oblique indication that the birth at Bethlehem was well known as a fact to the writer :—

“But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him” (John vii., 41-43).

Dr. Ramsay, in his comments upon this (p. 95), is very severe upon “critics with a bad theory to maintain” who fail to see in the passage that John writes ironically, and that the birth at Bethlehem as well as the Davidic descent was well known to him, and inferentially to those for whom his work was composed.

But it is surely not seriously contested that when the fourth Gospel, universally acknowledged to be the latest, was produced, the tradition in some form or other of the Bethlehem birth was generally current

among Christians. Justin, for instance, was aware of it, certainly from a source other than our two Gospels, and the controversies with the Jews would have inevitably brought it forward again and again as a polemical weapon.

These very verses, however, if we credit John's anecdote, afford the strongest evidence on another matter, for they show not only that the captious Jews who spoke knew nothing of the birth at Bethlehem, for otherwise they would have held their tongues, but also that the disciples, fervent partisans and actually in disputation, were equally ignorant, for had they known it, they must have deliberately kept up a mystification as discreditable as unwise, avoiding the employment of the crushing rejoinder that would have at once settled the matter, and allowing it by their silence to remain a cause of backsliding on the part of possible converts among the crowd, as we find from the closing sentence of the passage was the actual result.

It is thus again fairly evident that the Bethlehem birth was unknown even to the disciples during the life of their Master, and that if it be a true occurrence, it was kept a profound secret by Jesus from those around him.

As it is impossible to suggest a defensible motive for the maintenance of such secrecy on the matter towards his adherents, doubt is necessarily thrown on the correctness of the attribution of a birth there, and in consequence on the part of the Gospels that asserts it.

We have now to see how we can deal with the incidents recorded of John the Baptist on the hypothesis that the present Luke is a homogeneous composition.

We find that at the meeting on the Jordan, as told by Luke, it was demonstrated to John by heavenly signs that the unknown whom he was then baptising had the exalted rank of Messiah and Son of God.

It is very remarkable, admitting the intimate friendship as well as cousinship of Mary and Elizabeth recorded in the prologue (the former visiting the latter for three months at a critical period, and both being fully aware of the destiny of their sons), that at the time of the baptism (say thirty years later) there is no acknowledgment or consciousness of relationship,* and more extraordinary still is the later action of the Baptist when he thinks it necessary, on rumours of Jesus's doings in Galilee, to send disciples to question him as to his claim *even to the Messiahship* (Luke vii., 19 ff.).

This last difficulty is quite incapable of solution, and as to John's unconsciousness of his relationship with Jesus and the divine nature of his nominal relative at the time of the baptism, the only explanation possible, and that is unsatisfactory enough, is that both his parents, being aged, died during his infancy,

* Any suggestion that the cousins were known to each other on this occasion is, of course, inadmissible.

and most shamefully left not a scrap of paper to impart to their son the marvellous secrets that it behoved him to know.

Yet it has been contended, and it is the only means of accounting for the knowledge possessed by Luke of certain incidents of home life, including a verbatim report of a song of praise uttered long before in the seclusion of a woman's chamber in Palestine, that he obtained these particulars from a family history written by Zacharias!

In that case, John, in addition to receiving no information, written or verbal, from his parents, is still worse treated by them, for he could never have had access to the document written by his own father, which Luke long years afterwards was able to copy.

Without a doubt had John known anything of what is recorded in the prologue, he would long before the age of thirty have sought out his cousin in Nazareth, holding him as leader and adviser in all spiritual things, and not have set on foot a separate religious movement without even consulting him.

It is quite impossible to resist the conclusion that he who wrote of the relationship and close intimacy of the mothers, and of the miraculous recognition by John of his future Master while yet unborn (an interference with the course of nature which falls abortive and motiveless when tested by the later history), cannot be the same man who tells of the actions both of Jesus and John thirty years afterwards.

It is true that this wide gap of time separates

the two groups of incidents, but that is only for the reader, it does not apply to the narrator: with him it is not a real interval of years, it is only the turning of a page of writing; it is but the case of the playwright, when he makes his second act to open many years after the first, though—between them—he may have paused in the composition only for an hour. He does not forget and contradict what he has just before written.

In Luke's Gospel we read that Jesus comes back to Nazareth soon after the outset of the ministry and preaches in the synagogue, his fellow-townsman being amazed at his intellectual gifts and resentful of the authoritative tone of one who, with his family, was well known to them,* all of which well accords with the suggestion that the writer considered the spiritual gifts and authority to have been first bestowed at the baptism, being then for the first time displayed to his former neighbours.

But just before, *in the prologue*, we had been told how at the age of twelve the child Jesus was in knowledge of the law the equal, if not superior, of the Temple experts.[†] How could this openly

* “Is not this Joseph's son?” (Luke iv., 22). “Whence hath this man this wisdom; is not this the carpenter's son?” (Matt. xiii., 54, 55).

† This incident is so curiously like what Josephus narrates of himself that we give the passage: “Moreover, when I was a child, and about fourteen years of age, I was commended by all for the love I had to learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city came frequently to me together in order to know my opinion about the accurate understanding of points of the law” (Life, § 2).

displayed faculty have been afterwards utterly hidden from all acquaintances for eighteen years, and the synagogue authorities be unaware that they had a preternaturally skilled theologian in their midst? The facts must have been within the knowledge of all those "kinsfolk and acquaintance" who were at the time journeying back to Galilee with the family, among whom Jesus was at first supposed to be.

Thus again the prologue and the main narrative can hardly be the work of a single author.

When we compare the story of the temptation found in Matthew (iv., 1-11) with that in Luke (iv., 1-13), we find absolute verbal identity throughout, even as to such minutiae as that at the close of the forty days' fast Jesus was "afterwards hungered," and that the advantages of universal earthly dominion are depicted in the selfsame words: "All the kingdoms of the world,—and the glory of them"; a reversal of two of the incidents of temptation being the sole variation.

The narrative in Luke (vii., 24-28) of the mission of John's disciples also is an exact reproduction of that found in Matthew (xi., 7-11); and, again, we have this perfect identity of expression in an incident attending the feeding of the multitude, recorded in Matthew (xiv., 20) and Luke (ix., 17),—instances, not of repetitions of standard sayings of the Master, in which we might imagine a fixed form of words to prevail, but of professedly personal narrations or comments in which originality might be expected.

It must not be overlooked that it is only in the

pröem that the claim of the work to be anything else than a compilation is asserted ; though this defence is unavailable to those who, like Dr. Ramsay, maintain that the dedication to Theophilus is a part of the original work.

The point of view of no two men is the same ; thus, their accounts of any occurrences, if written without collusion, will, if they are honest and intelligent, be found on examination to be consistent, though in all probability there will be scarcely a phrase in common from end to end.

It may therefore be distinctly asserted that it is impossible that more than one of these passages in either instance can be an original composition.

Either Luke copied from Matthew, or Matthew copied from Luke, if both did not copy from some unknown original writing.

That each of the Gospel writers borrowed from some earlier document is quite feasible, but in that case they not only compile but annex bodily from writings of which we know nothing and which are therefore quite uncertificated.

If Luke (by which term we here mean one who wrote *all* the present Gospel) copied from Matthew, then Matthew certainly had not at that time the prologue now affixed to his Gospel, for no one could deliberately draw up a narrative so disagreeing with that story in every particular, and in the very next pages proceed to appropriate without alteration sentence after sentence from the former work.

The vast majority of authorities, with strong

reason, hold that Luke is the later work; though if the contrary be asserted and that Matthew copied from Luke, then the Gospel of Luke, for the same reason as given above, in dealing with the other alternative, could not have possibly possessed at the time its present prologue.

It is a fact that the whole of the narrative of the nativity forming the two first chapters of the existing Luke is written in a dialect of most strongly marked Hebraic character, much more so than the body of the work immediately following (though this distinction, as might be expected, is well nigh obliterated in our translation), and this circumstance at once warrants the suspicion that it was the work of another man, of another race, and that the story had been bodily and inartistically annexed with little attempt at retouching.

As some practical evidence of this extreme linguistic difference that will appeal to any one, whether conversant with Greek or not, certain considerations as to dialect in the two portions which have been brought forward by the author of the article "Gospels" in the Encyclopædia Britannica are here extended and tested as follows:—

In the Greek language is a small particle, "δέ," which in its primary sense of "but," "however," "nevertheless," is used, as are those words by us, as a means of linking two portions of a sentence in which the second part somewhat modifies or opposes the first.

This primary meaning, however, is but one of

several to which the little particle is applied, for in good Greek it may, according to the context, have the meanings of "and," "also," "indeed," &c.

Besides its use in these positions and its employment to avoid the inelegant repetition of a word, *δέ* is often virtually redundant,* though demanded by the fastidious claims of classical style.

Probably in consequence of these niceties of application, the use of this particle, save in its obvious primary sense, we find avoided more or less by people of other races to whom the Greek tongue was but a medium of intercourse or trade, the extreme Hebrew *patois* of Greek being by far the freest from it.

For instance, as is pointed out by the writer of the article "Gospels" just spoken of, the word is not found at all in the first Book of Maccabees till chap. iii., 36, and is scarcely to be discovered in the whole of Revelation, both works being intensely Hebraic.

We will now apply this test, first to the prologue, and then to the body of the Gospel.

Chapters i. and ii. (omitting the proem), containing the narrative of the birth and infancy will be found to consist of 127 verses—the particle *δέ* occurring twenty-two times.

Then, starting from the commencement of the main narrative, *i.e.*, from chapter iii., we count in like manner forward 127 verses (omitting, of course, verses

* In the very first sentence of the main narrative (iii., 1) will be found an instance of this redundancy, the *δέ* there being rendered in our translation by the word "now," which will be seen to be superfluous.

23 to 38 of chapter iii., a mere list of names)—in this group we find that $\delta\acute{e}$ is used fifty times.

Again, making a new start from chapter xi., and counting 127 verses, we find $\delta\acute{e}$ employed sixty times; and, yet again, starting from chapter xxi., and taking the next 127 verses, we find $\delta\acute{e}$ sixty-five times.

Averaging these three instances from the body of the work, we obtain a mean of fifty-eight occurrences of $\delta\acute{e}$ in 127 verses, whereas in the prologue we have only twenty-two in the same number of verses!

This consistent result cannot be accidental, and it must be added, that the portions of the main Gospel have been here taken by pure hazard, chapters i., xi., and xxi. being the starting points. If, as the writer of the article alluded to seems to have done, a special passage be selected, the contrast is much more startling.

There must surely be some confusion of thought on the part of those who, fully aware of this incontestable difference of idiom, contend that Luke purposely composed the narrative of the nativity in barbarous ultra-Hebraic Greek, though that extreme dialect was not his own, and is not again used throughout the work, simply because the story deals with exclusively Hebrew society! An author necessarily distinguishes between his own language and that which he attributes to his characters. We find in Shakspeare's "Julius Cæsar" an elevation and dignity of language befitting the majesty of Rome, but it is the Romans themselves who speak

here, not the author, who utters not a single word of comment or explanation.

Though Scott makes Jeannie Deans talk in lowland Scotch, of course he does not tell the tale in that dialect, but in his customary manner. And in the present case, even had the writer of this portion of Luke limited himself to making *his characters* speak fearfully bad Greek, he would have been none the more true to nature, for their real talk would be in Aramaic; besides, to be consistent, he should pursue this ultra-Hebraic dialect all through the main narrative, and this, assuming him the same man, he does not do.

But marked as is the difference in language between the prologue and the remainder of the Gospel, it is as nothing to the incongruity which exists between the first named and the short proem or dedication with which the work opens.

This is expressed in pure and elegant Greek, so that it demands much good-will to see in its classic phrasing the handiwork of the composer of the narrative which abruptly follows it. A work by Bunyan, with a preface by Addison, would be a faint illustration of the contrast.

An author, it is admitted, might use simpler language in the story itself than in the formal dedication, but he who wrote the proem, indisputably a cultured Hellenist if not a Greek, would hardly at once proceed deliberately to transform both style and dialect and interlard his narrative with rank Hebraicisms and provincialisms.

It therefore seems somewhat paradoxical boldly to infer unity of authorship from extreme dissimilarity in the character of different parts of the composition, as Dr. Ramsay does in the following sentence (p. 56):

“It is as clear as noonday that the author deliberately aims at the contrast in style between i. 1-4, and the following verses.”

Moreover, if Luke wrote for cultured people, as Dr. Ramsay says he did, why this affectation of language that would be accounted barbarous by them?

That a record of the teachings of Jesus, a message to all mankind, should have had such an origin as to have been written solely for the information and guidance of any one individual, however eminent, is well nigh incredible. These courtly phrases do not form a fitting prelude to such a theme as follows, while their tone is quite incompatible with any suggestion of divine prompting in the work itself.

This impropriety is so glaring that the highly secular dedication to “Theophilus” has been actually maintained to be—by a play upon words—really a spiritual dedication *under that name* to all who, loving God, were admitted into Christ’s church! As to this, we must remark that the epithet *κράτιστος*, so appropriate to an influential catechumen, can hardly by any ingenuity of exposition be so contorted as to apply to the mass of ordinary novices who have to be instructed in the fundamental doctrines of the faith.

And why this selection of words on the part of

the author, "that palter with us in a double sense," the occult meaning of which it has been reserved to a few to guess aright, when it was so much easier, as well as more expedient (not to say honest), to write clearly?

It might seem at the first glance a matter of minor import whether the writer of the dedication was also the author of the story of the nativity, and of the account of the ministry and death that follow it, but it is on the contrary vital to the reputation of the work as a homogeneous composition ; for when the dedicatory asserts that he personally had traced all things from the very first, this declaration from an anonymous individual is the only certificate the entire work possesses, and if it be merely an addition by one of a later period who wished to cover a group of ancient documents with his authority and repute, the guarantee is a fraudulent one, and obviously valueless.

But the difference in idiom between the prologue to Luke and the Gospel which follows only forms part of the disconnection between them ; the doctrinal change of front is equally obvious and startling.

The prologue is markedly written from the point of view of the earnest Israelite. The sacerdotal descent of John the Baptist is made a point of, the incidents of his birth closely follow those of Samson and Samuel ; he is bound from his birth by the specially Jewish Nazarite restrictions. With regard to the other individuals introduced, we find the performance of the Hebrew rites punctiliously recorded ;

the Holy Family make the Jerusalem journey yearly; reference to the Law is most prominent throughout the story; the song of thanksgiving of Mary is but a mosaic of Old Testament passages (principally from Samuel).

All this Jewish bias is suddenly cast off directly we touch the third chapter—we are in a different atmosphere altogether—the point of view of the author has at once veered to that of a Gentile proselyte, he is anything but an admirer of the Jews, the word “Jew” having with him generally an offensive meaning, while he goes out of his way to introduce favourably the Samaritan heretics so bitterly detested at Jerusalem. The Law is scarcely mentioned.

With the solitary exception of the dictum relating to the peccant hand or eye, Luke has every one of the *general* precepts grouped together in Matthew as the “Sermon on the Mount,” though he more artistically distributes them; but of those relating to, or even alluding to, Jewish scripture, Law, prophecy, or observances, not one is to be found.*

* OMITTED BY LUKE.

- Matt. v., 5. A quotation from Psalms xxxvii., 11.
- 7. A paraphrase of Psalms xli., 1.
- 8. Do. do. xxiv., 45.
- 9, 10. The words not found in the Hebrew scriptures, though the meaning is.
- 19-24. Refers to the Hebrew writings, the altar, and the Jewish code.
- 27, 28. Refers to Exodus and Deuteronomy as authorities.
- 33-37. Refers to Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy as authorities, also to Jerusalem as city of the great King.

As it is impossible that this selected omission can be accidental, it is clear that of set purpose he shut them out.

No writer can change in a moment from Jew to Gentile in such a fashion and afterwards consistently maintain the change.

Though our survey is now practically complete, there remain two matters akin to the subject which demand a few words.

First. From what source, apart from legend or tradition, could the writers of the Gospels have obtained the stories of the nativity?

The Apostles and disciples, among whom and their immediate successors may be found the early biographers of Jesus, first knew him when quite thirty years old, Luke indeed being without that advantage. They would not therefore be likely to be able to learn accurate and minute particulars of events accompanying a birth removed from their period by long years crowded with national disasters.

Dr. Ramsay (p. 88 f) draws the conclusion *from the general tone* of Luke's Gospel that he obtained his detailed information as to the incidents of private life connected with the nativity from a female source, and suggests that this might be Mary herself!

Matt. vi., 1-8. Refers to Jewish obligation of alms, use of trumpets to proclaim such, and to the practice of prayer at street corners.

16-18. Refers to Jewish forms of fasting, disfiguring their faces, &c.

vii., 6. Shows the national prejudice against swine.

12. Refers to the Law and prophets.

15. A warning against false prophets.

However, in that case, Luke could not possibly have refrained from recording in his account of the crucifixion, that this mother so pitifully concerned in the tragedy was witness of it (John xix., 25 ff), yet while he actually finds space to mention the presence of Jesus's "acquaintance and the women who had followed him from Galilee" (xxiii., 49), he takes no notice whatever of her existence.

This does not look like a continuance of the narrative of the life, by that writer who had in the prologue told of the annunciation, of the song of thanksgiving, and especially of the divinely prompted prophecy, "Yea a sword, shall pierce through thy own heart also," which foreshadows this very tragedy at which the later writing ignores her presence while carefully registering that of far lesser personages.

It is evident that Mary could alone be the *original* reporter of the angel's visit to herself; and of the interview with Elizabeth, with its minute incidents of the hymn and the pre-natal recognition by John, her cousin and herself are the only witnesses.

But Mark represents Jesus's friends as doubting his sanity, a circumstance quite incompatible with any knowledge on their part of these incidents; so that Mary must have kept these matters profoundly secret from the family circle for at least thirty years, though long afterwards accurately informing one or more strangers.

In the body of the Gospel the mother of Jesus is scarcely introduced at all, and then not as being in

the company of the disciples—indeed quite the contrary. The fourth Gospel alone represents her as being cared for after the crucifixion by the favourite disciple, who, though a fisherman of Galilee, is therein an acquaintance of the High Priest, with a home in Jerusalem.

It is remarkable that if Mary afterwards furnished the narratives to Matthew and Luke, or to any one who passed them to those chroniclers at second hand, that the Gospel written by her guardian, in whose house she was an inmate, has not the slightest allusion to them directly or indirectly, and it is likewise hard to comprehend how two tales so inconsistent one with the other could have issued from one source, and the two reporters be so utterly unacquainted with what each other had written.

If Mary had told the story to Luke only, whence could Matthew have obtained some of his incidents? In *his* story Joseph (apart from Mary) can be the sole possible informant as to the absolutely private matter of his discovery of his wife's position and the angel's assurance to him respecting it, as well as of the subsequent divine instructions as to the Egyptian journey and the return.

And neither from Joseph nor from Mary, nor, indeed, from any one, could he have gained the knowledge of the heavenly warning received by the Magi to flee from Judæa, which he relates.

The circumstance that the divinely-guided visit of the Magi and the angelic announcement to the shepherds have no apparent results, gives the sugges-

tion of legend, not of direct report from any one of actual occurrences.*

However, these interferences with the order of nature have been somewhat fancifully discovered to be—the one a divine intimation of the birth of the Saviour addressed to the Gentile nations, the other to the Hebrew world.

But the Magi disappear and nothing follows, the people being more concerned in bickering with Herod and then with Archelaus and petitioning Rome to rule directly over them, than in watching for the advent to power of an infant Messiah.

The closely restricted revelation to the shepherds, any influence of which would be dependent on absolute conviction of their truthfulness in telling of such a marvel, leads to nothing ; the momentary Messianic expectation which it is alleged was spread in the Bethlehem district (which demonstrably never reached the capital, close as it was) dies out again, and it is only after a lapse of thirty years, and then in Galilee, not in Judaea, that it is rekindled among another generation and another section of the race.

We have also seen that the divine communication to Zacharias as to the destiny of his son fails to reach the person vitally interested in it—viz., John himself, whose miraculous pre-natal recognition of the divinity of Jesus in nowise affects his conduct in the future,

* As the expression of doubt whether the evidence of a certain miracle is satisfactory has been represented as showing a scepticism as to the power of the Almighty to compass it, it is as well to affirm the fact that the suspicion in this case is merely the result of a firm conviction that He works not in vain.

which is in flagrant discord with that early prescience.

The whole question of a possible legendary or mythical basis for certain incidents in these narratives has been fully treated in the work of David Strauss ; but there is one remarkable parallel in Roman records, on which he does not dwell, that may be here noticed.

It is found in Suetonius (Aug. xciv.), and is as follows :—

“ Julius Marathus informs us that a few months before his (Augustus's) birth there happened at Rome a prodigy, by which was signified that nature was in travail with a king for the Roman people, and that the Senate in alarm came to the resolution that no child born that year should be brought up : but that those amongst them whose wives were pregnant, to secure to themselves a chance of that dignity, took care that the decree should not be registered in the treasury.”

That in B.C. 64, at the very time when the outbreak of Cataline's conspiracy was imminent, and Cicero was canvassing for the consulship, the Senate should be engaged in passing this idiotic decree and afterwards forgetting to register it, needs no refutation. It is only one of the group of legends connected with the miracles attending the birth of Augustus which the densely superstitious Suetonius, about A.D. 120 (*i.e.*, 180 years later), was interested in collecting.

It shows, however, that a popular legend of this character afterwards attached itself to the birth of Augustus, the Senate being represented as planning

to avoid the prophesied advent of a master to be at that time born by the selfsame expedient—the extermination of all young children of a certain age—as Herod in Matthew's story employs with the object of ridding himself of a predicted supplanter of his dynasty.

This tale of the Senate's action could not have arisen early after Augustus's day; it would spring up and develop only in times when that once august body had become degraded to abject servitude, and ordinary people would see nothing incredible in such an ordinance.

This brings it quite to the decadent time, when the Christian legends were becoming crystallised; their story being, whether intentionally or not, a very close copy of it.

Second. Although it is evident that the question whether Luke is a "great historian," and absolutely reliable on all other matters, touches not in the smallest degree the arguments which have been brought forward to show that in the case of the nativity story his statements are doubtful or incredible, nevertheless, as Dr. Ramsay at the close of his work devotes some space to defending, or rather asserting, the literal accuracy of certain passages which have been at various times adversely commented upon as not easily to be reconciled with acknowledged history, a few words must be given to the most conspicuous of these difficulties, *i.e.*, the following, found in Acts (chap. v., 34 to 39):—

"Then stood up one in the Council, a Pharisee, named

Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the Apostles forth a little space ; and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

“ For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought.

“ After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished : and all even as many as obeyed him were dispersed.

“ And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

It is remarkable that the references to Theudas and to Judas the Galilean, here made in succession, are equally found in Josephus in consecutive paragraphs : thus :—

“ While Fadus was procurator of Judæa it happened that a certain magician, named Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them and follow him to the Jordan, where he would by his power as a prophet divide the river, giving them an easy passage over it, many being deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to carry out this wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen against them, who, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many and captured many others alive. They also took Theudas alive and cut off his head, which they brought to Jerusalem.” (Ant. xx., 5, 1.)

Then, in the very next paragraph, after mention-

ing the famine which occurred in Palestine during the procuratorship of Tiberius Alexander, the successor of Fadus, Josephus adds:—

“ Besides this the sons of Judas the Galilean were now slain ; I mean of that Judas who caused the people to revolt when Quirinius came to take an account of the estates of the Jews.” (Ant. xx., 5, 2.)

Now, Cuspius Fadus, in whose term of procuratorship Theudas, according to Josephus’s clear statement, made his revolt, was so appointed by Claudius on the death of the elder Agrippa (say A.D. 45), retaining the post about seven years ; but the outbreak headed by Judas, which it will be seen Luke, in his reported speech of Gamaliel, places after it in time, actually occurred quite forty years before, *i.e.*, in A.D. 7 ; a very curious reversal of the facts, which has caused it to be surmised that a careless reading of Josephus (who only mentions Judas to identify his sons who were slain at the later date) is responsible for what at first sight looks like a huge blunder.

But Dr. Ramsay resents such a suspicion, and asks (p. 255) :—

“ But is not this too gross a blunder ? Is it credible that a person so shockingly ignorant and inaccurate should aspire to be a historian ? In his preface he declares that his motive for writing this work was that he was in possession of such exceptionally excellent information gained from first-rate authorities.”

He adds (p. 256) :—

“ I am confident that if it had been stated about

any writer who was not a Christian, it would have been universally treated with the contempt it merits.

“It is the sort of fancy that brands its originator and its believer as either lacking the critical faculty, or blinded by prejudice.”

Also :—

“Luke could hardly have read any additional authority without acquiring some more correct idea as to the time when Theudas lived.”

As, unless we accept an extraordinary explanation put forward by Dr. Ramsay, and to be presently dealt with, Luke’s idea as to the time when Theudas lived is quite incorrect, we may say boldly that he did not read any additional authorities, even if detailed information as to local riots occurring more than a generation ago in remote Judæa was in his day easily accessible, let us say, in Rome. The “aspirations” of the person who may have written this part of the work do not concern us; we are only occupied with his performances, and that the dedication in the front of Luke’s Gospel, appeal to which is made, was the composition of him or of those who wrote the remainder and the Acts is deeply doubted, reasons having been given for this grave suspicion, which, if theology is akin to any other science, should be replied to.

Dr. Ramsay, however, adds to his severe strictures on those who happen to differ from his views as to the Theudas question a single scrap of argument as follows (p. 258) :—

“Moreover, it is clear, on the recognised principles of

critical study, that Luke used some other authority, and was not indebted to Josephus alone ; for he mentions the exact number of persons who followed Theudas—viz., 400—whereas Josephus would lead one to believe that Theudas had a very much larger following.

“ It may be answered that Luke invented the number, and designedly, and through incapacity, varied from the account which Josephus gives. To that no reply need be given ; they who say so will be ready to declare that Luke, who could read Josephus, and suppose the procurator Fadus to be older than the great enrolment, was equally capable of reading any number of additional authorities without profiting by them.”

But we may leave to their fate the hypothetical antagonists whose arguments Dr. Ramsay selects and demolishes, and ask ourselves whether it is quite certain that Luke did *not* get this particular detail of number from Josephus.

Making use of the “ recognised principles of critical study,” before going further afield we turn to the pages of that writer and are soon rewarded for our trouble, for with the interval merely of two short chapters in the same section of the work we come upon the following passage in reference to another of the numerous pretenders who were about this time effecting partial risings in Judæa—this one during the procuratorship of Felix :—

“ Moreover there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem one who claimed to be a prophet and persuaded large numbers of the common people to accompany him to the Mount of Olives, saying he would show them how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down. Now when Felix was informed of these things he sent against

him a large body of horse and foot, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him.

“He also slew 400 of them, taking 200 alive.” (Ant. xx., 8, 6.)

We can understand the dead after an engagement being counted but not the rabble, variable from day to day, that would flock after an impostor such as Theudas, who was followed, according to Josephus, by a considerable proportion of the people, so that Luke’s minute precision in figures, the introduction of which is so meaningless in the speech attributed to Gamaliel, would seem to be the result of yet another misreading or imperfect recollection of Josephus.

As this would be a third blunder on the part of Luke, the present suggestion of it must be, we suppose, still more incredible and contemptible than that which has been already denounced by Dr. Ramsay, though the sole alternative offered us by him is to suppose that there *might be* two of the name of Theudas who did precisely the same thing forty years apart, concerning which solution something will now be said.

Now, there is in the Acts (viii., 9-13) another passage which makes reference to a personage also alluded to by Josephus, which is as follows:—

“But there was a certain man called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

Josephus (Ant. xx., 7, 2), after recording that Felix, the Roman governor, had conceived a passion for Drusilla, a Jewess of the royal blood, then the wife of the King of Emesa, writes:—

“He (Felix) sent to her a person, whose name was Simon, one of his friends, a Jew, by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician, and endeavoured to persuade her to forsake her present husband and marry him.”

But Felix was appointed in or about the twelfth year of Claudius (A.D. 52), while Luke’s magician, Simon, is converted by Philip, and is a penitent believer at a date when Saul was persecuting the Church, say from sixteen to eighteen years earlier.

How then could this early Christian proselyte be the base Jewish go-between employed by Felix in his amour at a much later date? The only conceivable explanation is that there were two of the name contemporaries and magicians. Thus we have two of the name of Simon, just as we have two of the name of Theudas, in each case alike in all known respects—a strange duality!

And, after all, this view is hardly defensible, for Justin, in his “Apologia,” writing 100 years later,

speaks of Simon the magician as a Samaritan impostor, Samaria being Justin's native province, so that he must be identical with Luke's personage ; and yet he obviously knows nothing about his conversion or he would assuredly have claimed him for the faith, instead of absurdly denouncing his memory to the Imperator, as he does (see p. 248).

The whole evidence on the matter does not give a strong impression of Luke's historical accuracy.

The conclusions arrived at in the present work are not in any way affected by the correctness or incorrectness of the following summary as to the possible origin of the birth histories, which is merely surmise on a matter which it is now impossible to certify.

The original Judæo-Christianity had held that Jesus first received the Holy Spirit at the time of the baptism, also that He was a native of Nazareth though descended from David ; the extant synoptical Gospels, in their original form, dating from that stage of belief.

There was a gradual progress of belief among the Gentile Christians that the divine nature of Jesus dated from the conception.

Objection would be inevitably made by Jewish opponents, with whom controversy was rife in the first two centuries, that their Messiah must not only be of David's race, but born at Bethlehem.

Thus the Christian leaders had the strongest inducement to demonstrate that these objections were invalid by representing Him to be born in

Bethlehem, and to prove by a methodical genealogical table (what had only been asserted previously) that He claimed descent from David ; at the same time it was desirable to show that the divine birth of Jesus was miraculously attested.

This testimony could in those days be easily put together by adding to the text of certain Gospels compilations from floating traditions and legends, in the form of detailed accounts of the divine birth miraculously attested, which taking place at Bethlehem fulfilled one portion of the Messianic requirement, while in each case an inserted pedigree proved the desired Davidic descent which disposed of the remainder ; the utter unlikeness of the existing narratives being due to the circumstance that there was no knowledge on either side by the like-minded editors of what was being done in the same field ; the place of origin and the range of circulation of these works being widely separated.

After discovery of the glaring incompatibility of a lineal Davidic descent in the male line with their own declaration of a non-natural birth, alterations were unskilfully made in the final link of each pedigree, so as to show that Joseph was not the real father ; which partial readjustment made the confusion worse still, it being then too late to effect the drastic suppression of the entire pedigree.

It is evident that no teaching of Jesus is at all affected by the incidents, whether historical, traditional, or legendary, with which the nativity is connected, so that even were we without any record

of them the lessons of the Gospel would remain untouched.

It has been shown that we have not the smallest knowledge as to the personality of the writers of our canonical Gospels, or any guarantee that the text we now depend on is as was originally composed, and with these stories then forming part of them. We have seen that on behalf of no writing in any form quoted or appealed to by the early Fathers up to the middle of the second century of our era is there the pretension advanced that they were inspired, or even of unquestioned authority.

It is submitted that it has also been reasonably demonstrated that, when a searching inquiry is made, the historical incidents recorded in these birth stories, the prophetic passages introduced as foretelling some of them, and the pedigrees inserted as proofs of a Davidic descent, are none of them devoid of grave, in many cases we may say insuperable, difficulties in the way of satisfactory explanation.

Such an accumulation of improbabilities as we here find has great argumentative force, for the conclusion drawn from them, from its nature, is not like a chain-cable liable to disruption should there lurk a flaw in a single link, but is comparable to a rope of a hundred strands, whose every fibre contributes to the strength of the whole ; that a thread may be frayed here and there does not appreciably touch its strength.

A true narrative, however imperfect, is like one of the objects of nature, in which, though there may

be at first visible or comprehensible but a small part of it, when we apply the microscope all that we ultimately discover harmonises with that portion which we have already observed and understood. A fictitious or garbled story is like the work of man in fraudulent imitation of nature, which may deceive at first sight and appear complete and consistent, but in which if we test it by the lens the defects are so obvious that at length there is no doubt of its spurious origin.

But the privilege of judging independently of these stories of the birth, which was universal and unquestioned in East and West for more than a hundred years after the death of Jesus, has been withdrawn, and an absolute acquiescence as to the verbal accuracy of all that may be found included in what are now canonical writings is demanded.

This enforced uniformity was brought about in an age in which we cannot discern the faintest trace of an intelligent critical spirit, when the ancient scriptures were habitually misunderstood and misquoted, and in a society the appropriate *nidus* for the facile incubation and propagation of error, by men highly fallible, often prejudiced as well as blindly credulous (as we know by their writings), such as Irenæus, Tertullian, and even the more gifted Origen.*

As to this claim of infallibility, we give a passage

* Origen can criticise minutely and intelligently the difference in style between the Epistle to the Hebrews and Paul's undoubtedly writings, but he can be quite blind to the amazing linguistic and doctrinal discrepancy between the Apocalypse and the Gospel, both of which he attributes to John the Apostle.

from the late Bishop Wordsworth, which has been lately referred to with approval by Dr. Copinger:—

“We are firmly persuaded that there are not any, even the least, errors or inaccuracies in the New Testament. If one may allege that there are one or two inaccuracies in the Gospels, another person may allege that there are four or five; and so on, indefinitely, till at last the claim of the Scriptures to be regarded as the Word of God and the Rule of Faith, is destroyed. It is indeed true that the Apostles and Evangelists, whose instrumentality was used by the Holy Spirit in dictating Scripture to the world, were not infallible in practice; they were men and liable to err. . . . In fact the human fallibility of those persons by whose instrumentality Holy Scripture was written, and the inerrancy of Holy Scripture itself, written by their instrumentality, constitute together the very essence of Inspiration.”

Between this absolute non-recognition of the possibility of error in any portion of these works as we possess them, and the claim of freedom to judge each for himself, to discriminate and, if need be, to reject, there is no middle resting-place, however much the point may be evaded by those who essay to mediate between these opposing schools of thought.

It is certain, as Bishop Wordsworth urges (though to point out the inconveniences of a certain admission is not, as he seems to think, to demonstrate its unreasonableness) that the right to dispute one phrase or word even entails the right to deny the correctness of others and make the divinely implanted reason and conscience of the individual the final court of appeal.

